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HILDA

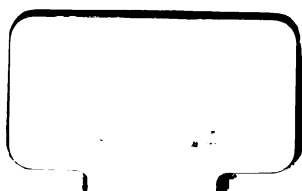
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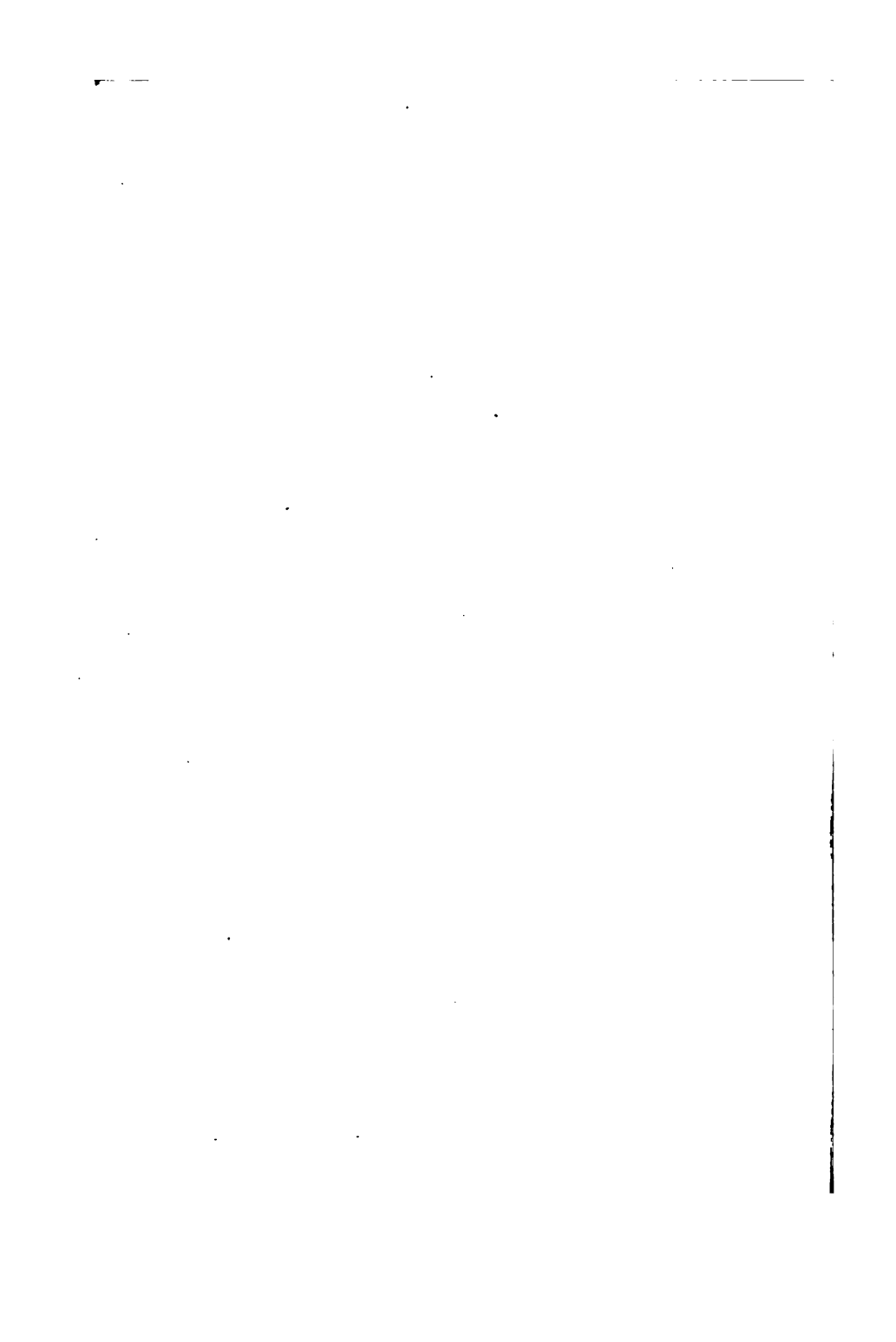


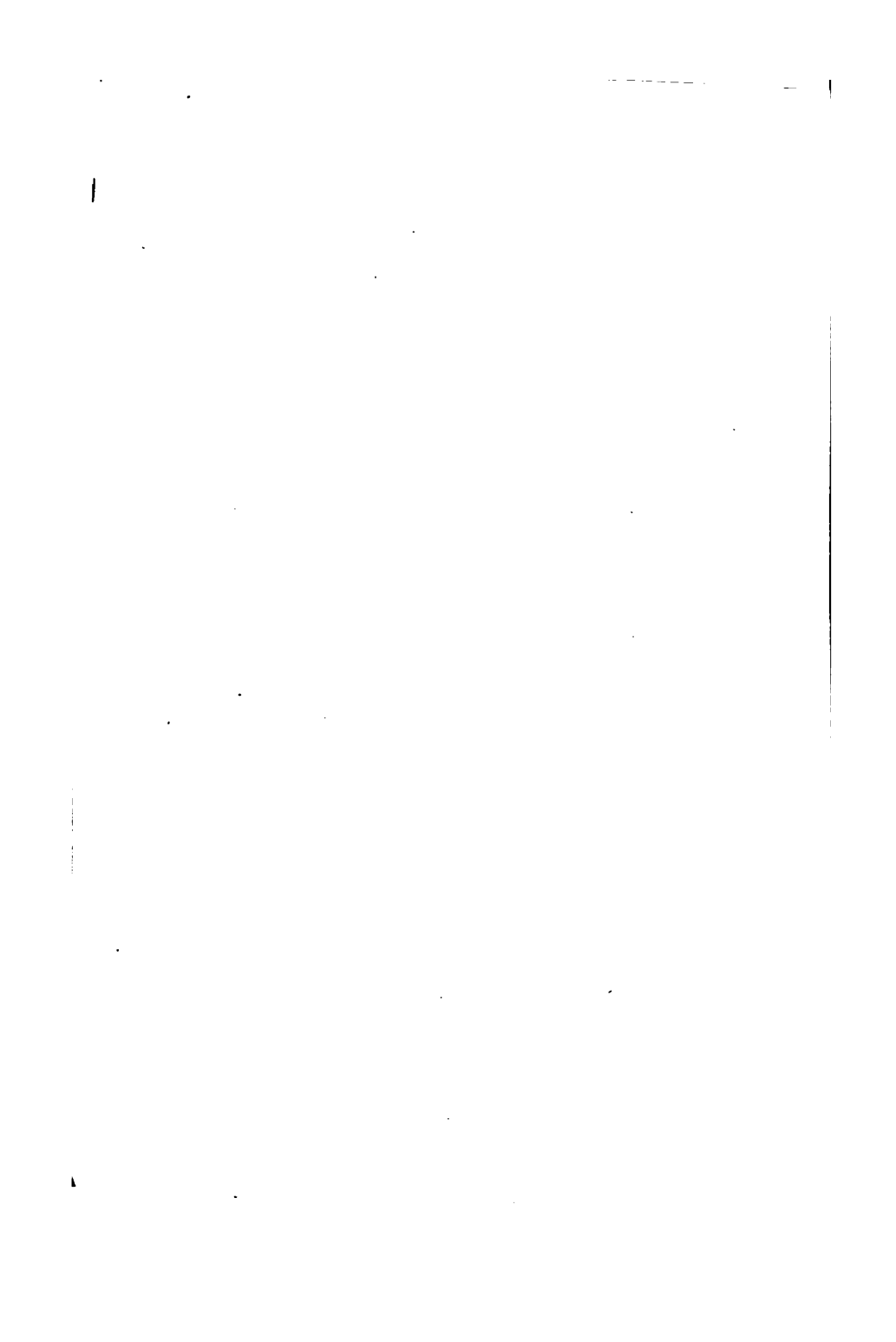
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THE ARBOUR SCHOOL-ROOM ON HILDA'S BIRTHDAY.—P. 50.

HILDA AND HER DOLL.

BY

E. C. PHILLIPS,

AUTHOR OF 'THE ORPHANS,' 'BUNCHY,' ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.



GRIFFITH AND FARRAN,

SUCCESSORS TO NEWBERY AND HARRIS,

WEST CORNER OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD, LONDON.

E. P. DUTTON AND CO., NEW YORK.

1881.

251. g. 188.

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HILDA AND HER DOLL.

CHAPTER I.

HILDA'S HOME.

‘**S**HALL I pick it for you, darling?’ Hilda Montgomery said one day to her little sister Dóra, who was then standing on tip-toe, with her little arms stretched out as high as they could reach, to gather a rose at an impossible height from a tree in Hilda’s own garden. ‘And even if you could reach it, you know, I think you’d better not try, because you might prick your *dear little fingers*; and you wouldn’t like that, would you, “Baby Dora?”’ the kind little sister went on, for Hilda herself was only a little girl of eight, although sometimes to hear her talk to Dora you might fancy that she was much older.

‘Baby Dora,’ as Hilda had herself named her little sister, was just two years old; and as Mr. and Mrs. Montgomery had never had any children but these two, we can hardly

be surprised that Hilda took a sort of little motherly care of an only sister more than six years younger than herself.

‘Miss Hilda prick finger too,’ a little black boy exclaimed, who, having heard what Hilda said, now came running up to the children, carrying an orange in each hand, which he had just picked for them from a tree he had climbed, Grandfather Charles having given him permission to do so; and in another moment Hilda and Dora were peeling their oranges, whilst the rose which the little one had wanted was lying at her feet, and another had been gathered, by Cornelius, for Hilda.

Dora loved to peel oranges, but out of respect to her pinafores was seldom allowed to do so, and she was now far too busy with her orange either to notice her flower or to remember that she had wanted to have it.

This little black boy, Cornelius Burton, had now often very thoughtful ways about him, which were perhaps copied a little from Miss Hilda’s own ‘pretty manners,’ which he, with many other black boys, and black men and women also in Grenada, admired very much.

‘Grandfather carl, Miss Hilda, a garn ya,’ he then said, and turned to scamper off; but Hilda had just finished peeling her orange, and called him back to give him half of it, which he gladly accepted. A little while ago Cornelius used to steal as many oranges as he wanted, but lately he had given up doing this.

Dora then wished him to wait and have half of her orange too, for she always liked to copy Hilda if she could; but the boy knew that if he waited until her orange was peeled, old grandfather would have to call again and again;

and as he was in a hurry for him to go and cut guinea-grass for Miss Hilda's pony, which, not being quite well, had been kept up in the stable for two days, Cornelius knew that he must lose no more time, and ran away.

Guinea-grass is tall, waving, beautiful grass, that grows in the West Indies, and which horses like very much indeed.

'Isn't Nenus tind boy?' said Dora, who, not having patience to wait any longer for the rest of the peel to come off, dug her little teeth, as she spoke, into the midst of her orange.

Hilda was a dark, little, sunburnt, bright-eyed, bright-faced, happy-looking child. And it was no wonder that she looked happy, for her life was a very, very happy one, all sunshine, through which not a single cloud had ever seemed to penetrate. But her life was therefore not all play; indeed, had it been so, no doubt it would have had many clouds, for if 'all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,' I am quite sure that all play and no work makes Jack not only a dull and stupid, but also very often a cross and discontented boy. Too much play tires as well as too much of anything else; but Hilda had just work and just play enough, and her work consisted of lessons learnt with, and made easy by her mother.

An only child for six years, Hilda had been much indulged; but so far indulging had not seemed to spoil her. She was naturally so kind-hearted a little girl that she always seemed to be thinking of others, and trying to make them happy, and in consequence everybody loved her, her nurse most dearly; and she and Dora both loved their nurse very fondly also. Old Grandfather Charles, an 'old-time-somebody,' as an old man was often called, who had

lived and worked for sixty years, longer than anybody else, on the property that now belonged to Mr. Montgomery, thought that there was no one in the world to equal little Miss Hilda ; as did also his little grandson Cornelius, or Nenus, this latter being Dora's name for the boy.

Hilda's home was in Grenada, a very lovely island, called by the poet Coleridge the most beautiful of the Antilles, and every one of these West India islands is noted for its beauty.

The cocoa-nut palm tree grew there ; the orange, the pomegranate, the banana, the mango, the neseberry surrounded this little girl's island home ; also the pine-apple, the avocado pear, the grenadilla, and many other fruits and vegetables.

The island of Grenada is only twenty-four miles long and twelve miles broad.

A mountain-range traverses the whole length of the island, of which the highest peak is called St. Catherine.

Many small rivers have their rise in Grenada, some of which have very strange names, such as the Great Bucolet, Duquesne, Beau Séjour ; and it was one of Hilda's great delights, when she and Dora went for short walks with their nurse and nurse-maid, to take off her shoes and stockings and paddle in some little river, which her nurse often allowed her to do. Hilda loved paddling—she loved, indeed, most amusements ; but there were not many games at which she could play in Grenada, partly on account of the very hot climate, and partly because she had neither brothers to teach her games nor sisters to help her play at them, for Dora was of course too small.

Grenada is divided into six districts, called parishes ; and

the capital of the island is St. George, which consists of hills and valleys, dotted here and there with houses.

Grenada has one of the finest harbours in the West Indies, and this port is a coal depot and central station for British West Indian mail steamers.

The bay is almost landlocked, and so encircled by hills that when looked at from a height it appears to be quite surrounded by land.

In the centre of the island is a large lake, two and a half miles round.

Some of the houses in St. George are grouped together, others are scattered about, and called a market-place.

Grenada produces, in large quantities, sugar, rum, molasses, and cacao. Molasses is syrup that drains from sugar whilst it is being made; and cacao is the cocoa or chocolate tree.

I have thus far described Grenada to you that you may understand a little where Hilda lived.

Her father owned a large sugar-estate in Grenada, where many sugar-canes were grown, from which sugar was obtained. The name of this property was Belvidere. The Great or Estate's House, where the Montgomerys lived, was about one hundred feet above the sugar-works, these latter consisting of a mill, a boiling-house (where the sugar was boiled), the book-keepers' houses, trash-houses, and the still-house, where rum was manufactured. The boiling-house had a large chimney, and the still-house a small one. In the distance, surrounded by trees, was a village, where the people lived who worked on the estate. A great many people are employed on a sugar-estate. Hilda every now and then begged to be allowed to go over the works and have every-

thing explained to her. This permission, however, was not often granted. Once or twice she had been allowed to go with old Grandfather Charles, and one day her father took her himself to see the people, who worked on the property, paid their week's wages.

The busher, or overseer, who had the supervision and control of the people, paid them through a window.

Hilda enjoyed this visit to the works very much, and just as she arrived a hogshead of sugar was starting for the wharf, thence to be shipped to England.

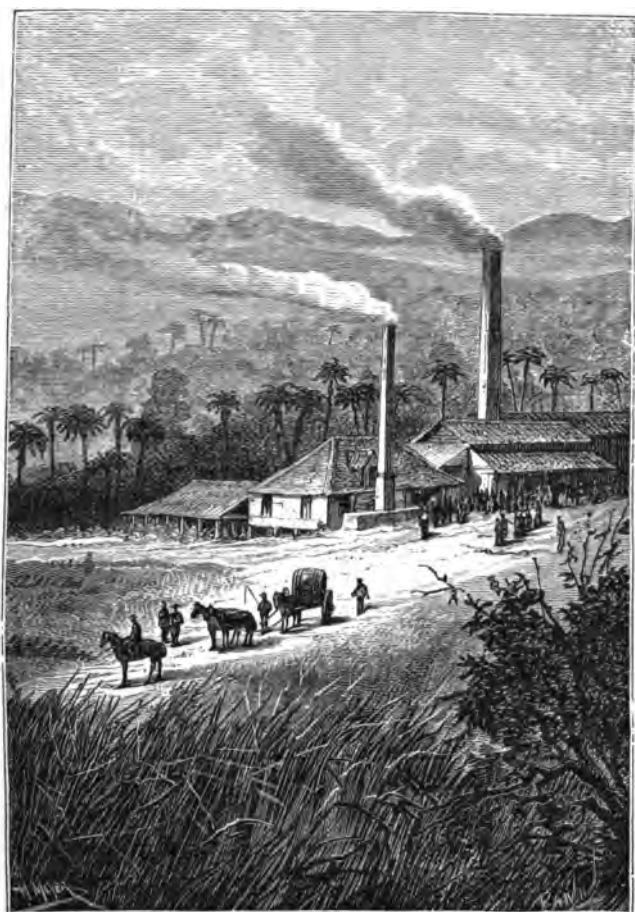
Cocoa-nut trees grew to the back of the works, and in front was bush and much guinea-grass.

The Estate's House was large, but consisted only of one storey.

In the yard, in a little semi-detached house adjoining the harness-room, and not far from the stables, lived Grandfather Charles; and although he was now nearly eighty years of age, he was still strong and able to do a good deal of work, watching the workpeople who required to be watched, sweeping out the yard, giving a look to the horses and cows, having, in fact, an eye over everything.

His little grandson Cornelius lived with him; and it was a good day for the boy when the old man adopted and removed him from parents who ill-treated him, to live in Mars' Montgomery's yard.

Cornelius was a handy, useful boy about the place, helping to drive in the horses and mules of a morning after they had been grazing in the pastures throughout the night, sometimes helping to groom them, attending to the dogs, fetching water, weeding the garden, being special gardener to Miss Hilda's own garden, and going errands for the nurse



BELVIDERE WORKS.

and old grandfather. And yet Cornelius was always on the spot if Miss Hilda wanted anything.

As this boy was only nine years old, he was very useful for his age.

He and another boy, Plunkett, groomed Miss Hilda's pony entirely between them. Then, when any of the horses were kept in the stable, these boys cut grass for them.

A great change had come over Nenus since his grandfather had adopted him.

Bird-nesting, which had once been one of his very favourite occupations, he had now given up entirely. Day after day, when he first came to live in the yard, had he taken every opportunity to kill, cook, and eat little birds ; but once when Hilda saw one of these little birds fall, she cried, and told him that she was quite sure he made all the birds unhappy when he was so cruel, whereupon Nenus promised not to be cruel any more, and from that day left off taking from their nests, or knocking down, poor little birds.

The horses and mules too were now beginning to know and care for Nenus a little, as they knew and cared for his little mistress.

Thus one gentle, loving little girl was doing a great work on her father's property, if it were only by teaching one little black boy, who had once seemed to be naturally very cruel, to be kind for kindness' sake.

Hilda's daily lessons began after a ten o'clock breakfast, and went on until about half-past one.

She and Dora played in the garden very often from about seven or half-past seven o'clock in the early morning, after their first breakfast (a cup of milk and a slice of bread and

butter), until about eight or half-past eight, when the sun became too hot for them to remain out any longer.

Their home was in a valley called the Vale of Tempe, and the surrounding hills often afforded them a beautiful shade from the scorching sun.

As it was too hot to walk much, the children were taken, by their parents, for pretty drives, and Hilda had learned to ride her own little pony very bravely.





CHAPTER II.

THE SECRET.

ALTHOUGH Hilda was a very wild, she was also a strangely thoughtful little girl, and would sometimes sit down alone for ever so long together, and tell anybody who then came near to her, and asked what she was doing, that she was busy thinking.

One day she must have thought for about three-quarters of an hour, and the result of this long thinking was that she jumped up, ran to Rebecca the nurse-maid, and told her a secret, which, she said, she must tell to nobody.

Some little children like to have secrets very much, and Hilda was one of these ; but her secrets, until this last one, were generally much about the same. She had picked a beautiful bunch of flowers, and had put it into her mother's room to surprise her, 'so you mustn't tell her, will you?' or the child's own best pine-apple was quite ripe, and she had taken it into father's study to surprise him. Dora had also begun to learn to tell secrets, but hers were generally told to everybody in the room separately, prefaced always with these words, 'Me tell 'ou sec'et.'

But Hilda had never had half so important a real secret before, and Rebecca had promised faithfully not to tell it to anybody.

One day, when Hilda was driving with her father and mother, they had taken her to see a negro school.

When the visitors went in, the pupils were very busy at their lessons, spelling, reading, writing, learning geography, and doing sums, and before they came away the scholars sang to them.

Hilda was much interested in watching the children at their lessons, and after that visit to the school her mother noticed that she seemed to pay much more attention to her own lessons than she had ever paid before, interrupting her every now and then with such a question as this, 'Do you think that would be a good thing for boys like Nenus to learn?' 'Do you think the boys and girls we saw the other day learn to spell those words too?'

For some days afterwards, whenever Hilda saw any boys or girls in the yard, she would call them to her, and ask how it was that they were not at school; and when she heard that they would like very much to be there, but could not be spared to go as far as the nearest school, she thought out a little plan, or rather a great plan for such a little girl.

She had lately read a book in which a brother and some sisters played a game of school together, the brother being the master and teaching his sisters.

Now, wouldn't it be great fun, Hilda thought, if she could keep a school in the afternoon, and teach her pupils what she had learnt in the morning, for of course she would not know anything else to teach them, and she would have to remember much better than she did now!

She thought she knew a capital place to have the school. She would ask Nenus if he would like to come to learn, and if he said 'yes,' perhaps he could find his little mistress some other pupils who would come too. This he did, and he also found a much better place for the school than the one on which Hilda had fixed, in a shady place in the bush, under a tree, where the sun could not hurt Miss Hilda at all.

'I wonder what we shall want in the school-room?' said the little girl to Nenus; 'I must try to remember what the other school had.' This was the only school that Hilda had ever seen. 'There must be forms to sit upon, I suppose; or do you think, Nenus, we could stand?'

Nenus thought that they could all sit upon the ground except the teacher, and there was a stump of a tree that would make a first-rate seat for her. Then there must be a wall to hang the map on, Hilda thought, for there was this at the other school, and hers must be quite a real one.

Nenus fancied that a tree would do for this, if they had a map. There was a large map at home that had been bought for Hilda, but had never been hung up, and she felt sure that as she and her mother did not use it, it could not hurt at all to bring it out. But desks! Hilda knew that she had seen these at school, for some of the boys and girls were writing on them.

Nenus knew nothing about desks, so could not help her here; but he said that as some of the boys who were coming to school were older than he was, and had been to a real school once or twice themselves, perhaps they could make some desks.

Everything else would be easy to arrange. Pieces of slate on which to write they could pick up by the river-side, and bits of slate also to serve as pencils. Hilda's books would do, because she seldom used them of an afternoon; and if she did, she could not be using them in two places at the same time. But only one child would be able to use a book at once, they could not read in class as they did at the other school, there being only one book of a kind; but this would not really matter. And, oh! it was fun to have arranged all this; and hers would be such a very real play at school, much *realler* even than she had read about in the book, because it wasn't quite real for a brother to be his sisters' teacher, but it was for her, Miss Hilda, to teach Nenus.

'What's the best day, mother, to begin school, if you're going to begin?' Hilda asked her mother one day whilst she was at her lessons.

Mrs. Montgomery looked up quickly and sighed.

'It isn't anything unhappy, mother,' the child said, 'to begin school, it's play; but it's a real secret, so I mustn't tell.'

Had Hilda heard anything about it? Mrs. Montgomery wondered—anything about the plans that had been formed for sending her away from all her great happiness to England or to France, in six short months' time, to school? Could she have heard about this, and call it fun to be separated, and sent about 4000 miles away from father, mother, Dora, and Nana, as she called her nurse?

'What is the best day, do you think, mother?' she repeated. 'What day do they begin where we went the other day? Oh, but of course that school's every day. Still, they must have begun once; what day do you think it was?'

‘I dare say a Monday.’

‘Yes, I dare say it was,’ said Hilda, ‘and that will do very well ; but don’t look, mother dear, please, for a moment,’ she went on, ‘because I want to count something, and you might guess the secret if you looked,’ and she ran into a corner to count on her fingers how many days off next Monday was from to-day, Thursday. The little would-be teacher was anything but clever at figures. When the calculation was over, she thought that Monday would just do, because she had not yet quite pupils enough, and she had perhaps better look over her lessons a little bit more, so as to remember better how to teach them. What a pity it was that Dora wasn’t old enough to play too ! But it was a very good thing, Hilda thought, that she had told her secret to Rebecca, because she was not allowed to go alone farther than the garden gate, and the school was just outside, so Rebecca must come with her.

At first she had wondered to whom she should tell her secret, but when she remembered that her nurse was much too busy to help her, she soon decided that it must be to Rebecca.

The only misfortune was that sometimes of an afternoon, and school must be of an afternoon, directly the child-gang left off their work, Rebecca had to take Dora out ; and as she was too little to understand about school, and would only play, she would be an interruption. Hilda determined, as soon as she could spare time, to have a long think what was to become of Dora. At last she came to the conclusion that their nurse could very likely have her during school-time, as this could not last long because of tea. Then another slight difficulty arose. How could

Hilda be sure of going out every day, when it might even rain sometimes, and the school on the hills was every day, or nearly every day, she knew?

‘Oh!’ Hilda answered herself, ‘it isn’t going to rain for a long time, as the seasons are just over; and I’ll go every day, except I can’t, and then I’ll send Rebecca to say, “Please, there will be a holiday.”’





CHAPTER III.

THE LITTLE MISTRESS AND HER PUPILS.

IT was Monday, and Hilda had as many as six pupils with whom to begin school ; but they were all boys. Strange to say, though she, Rebecca, and Nenus had told girls about *it* quite as much as boys (for Rebecca herself quite joined in the fun of the school), not one girl had come. They had all gone home as soon as their day's work was over.

The trunk-of-tree seat for the little mistress did capitally, and the scholars stood beside her or sat upon the ground, as they liked.

Hilda had been taking books out to the school-room every spare moment of the day, and fortunately for her and her books, Jack, the special house-dog, had had sense enough to take up his position beside them, or else when school began most likely more than half of them would have been missing, as little black boys, unfortunately, are not slow to steal what comes in their way.

The boys were delighted at the thought of learning, and had far more confidence in their little teacher than she had in herself.

Oh, but, Hilda remembered as soon as they had all assembled, she hadn't been at the school at the beginning, so she did not know what they did first. She knew how to end, they must sing something; but she did not know anything about the beginning. Perhaps singing would do for that too. Anyhow, as it was as good as anything else for a beginning, they would try that, and Hilda led off a little song that she knew very well, but, unfortunately, none of the boys knew one word of it, so she had to stop. What did they know? A few of them seemed to know the same words, but she had never heard these. Perhaps, she thought, they had better teach her their words, and she would teach them her tune. But then, she remembered that she would be learning, not teaching, so that would not do, and meanwhile a great deal of precious time was being lost; so she decided just to teach them the words of one verse of one hymn, and as this was only four lines, they quickly mastered them and the tune too, and all sang together.

But Hilda said to herself as she sat down (of course she had stood to sing), 'We won't have singing at all to-morrow, as it takes ever so much too long.'

The first lesson that Hilda generally said to her mother of a morning was a Scripture one, and the book out of which she learnt it she had brought out with her, so as to have that lesson first now. She asked her pupils some of the questions that she had been asked in the morning, but she had to answer most of them herself, as they had not learnt this lesson, and of course could not do so as they hadn't the book. She told them to remember it better to-morrow, but felt that she could not be angry with them, as it wasn't their fault.

Then Hilda gave a spelling-lesson ; but the boys could not spell many of the words she asked them, as this too was from her morning lesson, and they hadn't learnt it. What a pity it was, she said, that they hadn't books !

Then they suggested spelling without books things that they could see, and Hilda, looking round that moment, and seeing Jack, thought this a capital plan, and told them to spell *dog*. This they managed very well. The next thing she saw was a *tree*, that also they knew ; *boy*, quite right again ; *bird*, at this they hesitated, only one boy knew how to spell it ; *girl*, Hilda had to help just a little with this ; *slate*, that they knew quite well. This was a much better way of learning spelling, Hilda was sure, than doing it out of a book, and it saved all the trouble of learning, so she should ask her mother to let her learn spelling that way too.

At this moment a caterpillar crawled over a leaf quite close to Hilda. That would be a splendid word, she thought, and gave it to her pupils to spell.

'*C-a-t*,' they began. 'Yes,' she said ; 'isn't it easy for a long word ?' But here the pupils came to a full stop. '*Er, er*,' Hilda kept on saying over to herself, for she could not quite remember whether an *e* or an *a* came next, now they had put her out by stopping ; she knew that both were in the word, as she had learnt it, but she did not know where to find the *e* now, as the boys kept on pronouncing the word *caterpillar*.

After trying for a long time, the little teacher changed her mind about the value of the spelling-book, and looked into it ; but as she could not find the word, she said she could not remember it now, but they must all write it out to-

morrow for not knowing it, and she would write it out herself first at home.

Then followed a reading-lesson, but Hilda now did so want her mother every now and then to tell her how to pronounce a word. However, this lesson was not so difficult, because if they did not quite know they could guess at the words, and they might guess rightly.

But Rebecca now reminded Hilda that tea would very soon be ready, and they must therefore go home. This was a pity, as school was just getting nice, and they hadn't had sums yet, or writing, or geography, and she had brought out the large map, and ever so many books that they had not used; but Hilda was accustomed to obey, so dismissed her school at once. Rebecca told her there was time for singing if she liked, but she said, 'No, thank you,' she thought she did not quite like any more singing to-day.

The nurse-maid had to return twice to carry in all the books. Hilda need not have taken out half so many, but she had no idea that the lessons would take nearly as long as they had. Meanwhile Mrs. Montgomery was lying down,—this she generally did of an afternoon,—so she saw nothing of the return of the books.

The next day, when the school assembled again, Hilda thought they had better have sums first, as they all had slates. But she found that she could not set a sum without seeing it set first, and then she must have a table, and take great pains, or it would all be crooked; so she began to think that they could not have sums to-day, although it would be such a pity to waste the slates.

Then she remembered they could do some writing, and

she could easily set them little words, for Hilda was clever at writing. But she found it a difficult lesson to teach, because most of these boys, never having been to school, did not know at all how to begin the words, and they would not wait for Hilda to show them.

The little teacher never thought to make them begin with strokes and pothooks, as she had begun to learn to write, because it was so long now since she did pothooks that she had forgotten all about them ; and then the absence of a table, or some desks, was a dreadful drawback to writing ; but the pupils promised to get some bits of wood, and make a table themselves by to-morrow, so the writing was adjourned till then.

And to-morrow the table was really there, and the lessons in the bush were continued.

Mrs. Montgomery began to think that Hilda's books were a great deal soiled when she came to say her lessons out of them, but she was always poring over these books now, so perhaps that was the reason.

Mrs. Montgomery had never seen her little girl so extraordinarily anxious to learn before, so attentive altogether at her lessons, so full of inquiries as to this and that which she did not quite understand, that she really did not like to find fault with her on account of the books being soiled. Rebecca, who was a tidy girl, always carried them in and put them in their places after school was over.

Sometimes now there were eight pupils, sometimes nine, and every day Hilda managed the lessons better, because every day she taught them better to herself. She was a most persevering little girl, but she never gave words again to spell like caterpillar. This word, however, had been

written out and quite mastered by all. Hilda had asked her mother to find it for her in the book.

This fit of industry of the little girl's was certainly very surprising, and Mrs. Montgomery was really beginning to think that Hilda had certainly heard something about being sent to school, and was now learning so industriously to prevent this from happening, and the thought made her very sad.

The first geography lesson was quite a failure. To begin with, the map could not be fixed upon a tree, so two of the elder pupils held it, and as they did not always hold it in the right place, and kept on moving round to look at it themselves, their fingers, which were not very clean, left rather long marks upon its sides.

Hilda required a stick to point with. This was easily procured for her. Altogether, though some things were awkward in the bush, some were very convenient.

But somehow the geography was very difficult to teach even with a stick, because the stick wouldn't point right. Hilda could show them very well the difference between land and water, because the land was painted different colours, and the water was all a dirty yellow; and she could tell them that there was much more water than land, but this was the first time they doubted their little teacher, because they all began to measure on the map, and there wasn't anything of the kind.

Hilda was sure she had learnt that, but now she began to think she had learnt a mistake. Unfortunately, her large map was one of Europe, not of the world at all, so it was no wonder that she was all at fault. She herself had learnt very little geography as yet.

Then they wanted to see Grenada, and Hilda, who was now getting quite confused, because they would all crowd round the map together when she was trying to think and remember, and couldn't, said that if they would just let her see, she was quite sure that she could show them, as she had found it in her own little map quite alone this morning. She did not like big maps at all. They were quite different, and she could find things much easier in a number of little maps than in one big one.

She would bring out her own little atlas to-morrow, and meanwhile she would ask her mother to show her how to measure the land and water in it, for it to come right, and to show her Grenada, and give her a very, very long geography lesson to-morrow morning.

Most things had seemed to favour Hilda's school. Little Dora, not being very well, had always stayed with her nurse ; and Mr. Montgomery, having gone to St. George for a few days, had not wanted Hilda once to go out with him of an afternoon since she had begun school, as he sometimes did when he was at home. As it happened, supposing she had not had school, she would have gone out with Rebecca alone, and as the nurse-maid always took her work with her to the school, she herself had lost no time.

Nenus was certainly Hilda's best pupil ; and this was not to be wondered at, as Nana, who knew a good deal herself, had often taught him. They were now all getting on pretty well with their writing, the boys seeming to have a talent for this ; and when they had a table, and Hilda asked her mother for some of her old copy-books, and then took them out for them to copy from, they made real progress.

But something dreadful, as Hilda said, happened one afternoon, and about this I must tell you.

The busher had come up to see his master, and as the latter had not yet arrived home, Mrs. Montgomery, who also had something to say to the busher, asked him to walk in and wait until his master should return. He came about a quarter of an hour before Hilda was due in her arbour school-room. Now the little mistress always trusted to Rebecca to tell her when it was time to go to school, and Rebecca never failed to come and tell her in very good time ; but to-day the girl, hearing a gentleman's voice in the dining-room, thought that she would wait until he went, to call Miss Hilda.

The child was sitting in a corner of the dining-room, with her geography book in her hand, when he came in. Her mother had found it difficult to end this lesson in the morning, and ever since her dinner Hilda had been studying it again. She had discovered her mistake, and the atlas had now been put out to take to the arbour school-room. Hilda was very glad to understand about it now, and was longing to explain it all to her pupils. She was reading it over again and again, so as not to forget it once more. She knew she might not take out the geography book as well as the atlas, because it was quite a new one, only late'y bought at St. George, and she had promised her mother to be very careful with this book.

Rebecca would never allow any of the books to be taken out after the first day until they went also, that the boys should not be tempted to steal them. Jack had something else to do besides watching books every day. He generally went with Hilda, however, to help to keep order during school-time.

The little girl now laid down her book to listen to what the bushier was saying to her mother. He was telling her about a new school that somebody wished to have built in the neighbourhood, if her husband would give his consent to its being built at a place called Glottis, a portion of his property.

This rivetted Hilda's attention. She was as much interested now in the subject of schools as though she had been a little member of the school board itself, and she did so hope that this would not interfere with her school at all.

Mr. Fowler described the site on which it was to be built, and the method upon which it was proposed to carry out the teaching at the new school, and Mrs. Montgomery expressed very warmly her approval of the whole arrangement, as she knew that a school in the neighbourhood was very much needed.

No wonder that a quarter, half, three-quarters of an hour slipped by whilst Hilda listened to the conversation, and forgot, when Rebecca did not come as usual to call her, that it was getting very late. She ought to have been with her pupils at least half an hour ago, and-as a few of them went to school about half an hour too early, it would seem to them as though they had waited a very long time.

Hilda sometimes gave a prize to the first comer, and the reward consisted of a bit of cake or a piece of bread that she had saved from her lunch. The boys were all anxious to win this prize.

This afternoon the scholars grew very impatient waiting for their little mistress, and two new boys, who had come to-day for the first time, said that they had better go round

to the Great House and ask if Miss Hilda were not coming, and as she might be just starting they had better go to the front entrance. Two of the best and most regular boys were unavoidably absent to-day, or they would have known that they dare not do such a thing ; but the rest now all set out in a body to inquire for Miss Hilda.

The busher, hearing steps, and thinking that his master was arriving, quickly snatched up his hat, and went out to meet him, holding a paper in his hand in which he was looking for something to show to Mrs. Montgomery ; but what was his amazement when on the doorsteps he saw three native boys and several in the distance ! He could not tell exactly how many there were, as two or three, he fancied, had run behind the trees. What did it mean ? He felt sure they must be up to some great mischief, and catching hold of the nearest to him, he flung him off the steps so violently that he fell on to the ground. His scream frightened Mrs. Montgomery and Hilda very much, who had also come out to meet, as they thought, 'the mar'sa.' It was a dreadful moment for poor little Hilda, who saw directly what it all meant. She must be very late, and they had come to look for her ; and Plunkett was lying screaming on the ground, and he had told Rebecca that he meant to win the prize to-day. Poor boy ! perhaps he was very much hurt, she thought. There were two new boys, as she could see at a glance ; but she could not see Nenus. He was there, however, at the back, peeping over the shoulder of another boy. Two had run away. None of the boys wore hats or caps. These they had left hanging up on the tree where they generally put them when they were in school.

Mrs. Montgomery looked very much surprised, the



‘HE FLUNG HIM OFF THE STEPS.’

busher was very angry, and poor little Hilda was very unhappy.

'Don't, please, don't hurt them!' she entreated, as soon as she came out, just in time to see Plunkett, the best of all her pupils but Nenus, thrown upon the ground. 'It's my fault, only I didn't tell them to come; I ought to have been sooner, I expect. It's the secret, mother,' she continued; 'I told you I had one. Don't you remember? I teach them lessons, and I didn't go in time. Oh, and it's the geography too, that I didn't know yesterday. May I, please, go at once now?' she went on, as the fallen boy picked himself up and made a bow to Hilda. He too, it seemed, had learnt 'pretty manners.' The boys were all wonderfully respectful to their little teacher. Some of her gentleness seemed to have been reflected on them.

Mr. Fowler looked round at Hilda very much astonished, but said nothing. Mrs. Montgomery, who could not understand at all what her little daughter was saying, led her back into the dining room to give an explanation, when the boys, who were now beginning to feel hungry, ran for their caps, and betook themselves to their several homes; and although Hilda had so well mastered the geography, she could not that day, at all events, impart her knowledge to her little class.

Rebecca, who had heard the noise also, had gone out a back way to see what had happened, and soon returned to tell Miss Hilda that the boys had all gone home, and to satisfy her, that Plunkett was not hurt.

Hilda should not have had this great secret from her mother; but, to do the little girl justice, she thought that it was a secret she would like very much, and she had certainly

wished several times to tell it; but the secret that Mrs. Montgomery was still guarding from her little one, which she knew she could not guard much longer, so weighed upon her mind and spirits, that she gave the child little encouragement to do so, and did not now half guess, as was usually her wont, her funny little girl's funny schemes for pleasure.





CHAPTER IV.

THE CEDAR TREE IN HILDA'S GARDEN.

THE little girl pleaded so earnestly for the boys, that Mrs. Montgomery asked the overseer to take no steps whatever in the matter until he heard from her husband what he would like to have done to them, who, if their conduct deserved no worse name, had taken a very punishable liberty in thus coming to the Great House. He therefore only walked down the pathway to see the boys out of sight, and then re-entered the house. Mrs. Montgomery again invited him into the dining-room.

Hilda was not at all afraid to tell her mother all about the school, for neither she nor Rebecca had thought that they had done anything wrong in keeping the arbour school a secret; and had it not been for her mother's changed manner, I doubt if the little girl could have kept so important a secret so long, but Mrs. Montgomery somehow never seemed at all to want to guess it.

One thought now so occupied and engrossed her mind, that she had little room for any other—Hilda going right

away from her, her darling little Hilda, only eight and a half years old, going right across the wide Atlantic Ocean to school, in six short months' time! How could she break the news to the child, tell her of the grief that was in store for her when she must bid 'good-bye' to father, mother, Nana, Dora, Grandfather Charles, Rebecca, her pony, the other horses, the cows, the dogs, everything and everybody she loved, and all who loved her, the home in which she had been born and had spent her unclouded childhood, the only, and all the, people in the whole world whom she knew and loved! Oh, Mrs. Montgomery, whose loving nature Hilda had very much inherited, knew what it would cost her child to bid adieu even to the pictures in her nursery, to the flowers in her garden, without even thinking of the people—knew so well what this farewell would cost her poor little affectionate Hilda! Therefore was it any wonder, when weighing all these things, that her mother could not find it in her heart to scold because the books out of which she learnt so industriously were soiled more and more? was it any wonder that when Hilda hinted at a secret connected with school her mother put her off?

When one great, great sorrow engrosses all the mind, where shall we find room to think, take note of, or even understand anything else?

As Mrs. Montgomery now led Hilda back into the dining-room, she drew her child very lovingly towards her, and put her arm round her waist.

'I don't think Plunkett was much hurt; do you, mother?' the child said at once. 'I saw Rebecca go out to see, so it will be all right, because *she* knows the secret.'

'What is your secret, Hilda?' asked her mother. 'If it

is about these boys, you must tell mother the whole of it, darling.'

'Yes, it is,' she said, really delighted to 'out with it' at last. 'You remember how we went to see that school in the hills, and how well the boys all said their lessons there? Well, I wanted something new to play at, so I thought it would be a good game to play at school; and as I hadn't any brothers or sisters to come to it, I had real boys like Plunkett and Nenus. And those are the children, all but a few who I couldn't see there, and two who were there but didn't belong—a big one near to Plunkett, and another; but perhaps they meant to belong to-day. I didn't see the smallest boys that come to the school at all. P'raps they didn't come to-day, as they don't all come quite every day,' Hilda rattled on.

Mrs. Montgomery asked a number of questions before she could understand much about Hilda's school, and then the little girl, to her great glee, was told to take her mother and Mr. Fowler to see her school-room, for she was very proud to exhibit to them the pretty arbour that the boys had made for her in the bush.

Hilda told her mother that of course she never went alone to the school, as it wasn't in the garden, but that Rebecca went too, and that if any boys came to the school that Rebecca thought Nana wouldn't like to come, she sent them away. Hilda said that she did not think Rebecca would have let the boy next to poor Plunkett stay, as he did not seem to look a nice boy at all. Then she told the names of all her pupils, said what lessons they learnt, and ended by asking if her mother did not think her very clever to have kept the secret so well.

Mrs. Montgomery looked very grave. 'Hilda,' she said, 'you must not have these sort of secrets from father and mother again; will you remember that? Always ask us first if you want to do anything of this kind if you may do it, because I do not think that your father would like you to have this school at all; and you should have asked, too, if you might take out your books. That is how they have become so very dirty of late, I expect. I am really very vexed, Hilda,' her mother went on; 'and Rebecca should have known better than to allow such a thing, even if you did not. I shall have to scold Rebecca very much for this.'

'Oh, please, please do not, mother darling!' said Hilda, now very sad because the secret that she had thought would please her mother had done just the opposite. 'Rebecca couldn't help it, because, of course, she couldn't tell when it was a secret, could she? for you mustn't tell secrets; and, oh,' she exclaimed, suddenly remembering again, 'I do hope father will let me go on with school, because we haven't had the geography lesson again since I didn't know it!'

They returned to the house, and the bushier was shown into his master's study, there to wait for him until he should arrive and be ready to speak to him. Dora was now brought down into the dining-room, that both little daughters might be in readiness to bound towards father, and be lifted into his arms and kissed, so soon as he came home.

This was now very soon; and directly the little girls had had their kisses they were sent into the nursery to their tea, and Mr. Montgomery, as soon as he had had a few minutes' talk with his wife, went into his study to see his overseer.

Mr. Montgomery was a very busy man !

Hilda was so pleased to see her father again that for some time she really forgot her trouble.

After her parents' dinner she was sent for to tell her father all about her secret.

'Are you going to let that school be built on your property, father?' she asked, directly she had taken her seat upon his knee, this being a very usual seat of Hilda's when father had a little time to spare. She had been thinking a good deal about this proposed new school, although she had not said a word about it to any one.

'I did not want you to let it be built at first,' she went on, 'because I thought that Nenus and Plunkett would go to it, perhaps, but I don't think they will; and as Nenus said once that there were ever so many boys and girls who don't go to school at all, I hope it will be built; and I've been thinking, father, that that cedar tree in my garden (I have one in my own garden, you know) might be cut down to help build it, if you did not mind, and you let the school come; are you going to, do you think?' Hilda continued. Then she said, 'I should so like my cedar tree to be used,' and after that remark the little girl at last waited to take breath.

'Yes, Hilda,' her father answered, 'I have given consent to have this school built; but what is it that I hear about *your* school? Tell me all about that now.'

She then told her father all that she had told her mother, and though he looked somewhat pleased, and smiled from time to time at what his very funny little girl had done, he did not quite approve of her new game; but when she pleaded very earnestly to be allowed to go on with it,

he at last gave his consent to her having school one hour, for two, or at the very most sometimes three, afternoons a week ; and then Nana was always to go with her as well as, or instead of, Rebecca, and she was not to work so hard any more in preparing the lessons.

Hilda was satisfied, kissed her father and mother very lovingly and gratefully for this permission, and very soon after it was given went to bed.

There is no twilight in Grenada. Here darkness comes suddenly and very early, considering that all is summer weather. Hilda did not sit up long after it was dark. With the birds, this little girl went early to roost ; with them, she also rose betimes. But the child went very gladly to bed that evening, looking forward the next day to giving her postponed geography-lesson, when the pupils, as well as the teacher, really acquitted themselves very creditably. And then a new school arbour was built within the garden, rather nearer to the house, where not only a table appeared, but to which also several seats found their way.

‘Poor little girl!’ her father said to his wife after she had gone to bed ; ‘this new “plan” of Hilda’s shows me all the more how very important it is for the child soon to go to school, where she will have proper companions and proper occupation. She is too much with grown-up people, troubling her little head about schools and cedar trees wherewith to build them. It is much better for her to go to school, mix with other children, and find her level, sad, very sad though it will be for us to part with her. It is not good for a little child to be so constantly with those who think and make so much of her ; and the doctor says, too,

that the climate is beginning to tell upon Hilda, and that the roses will never come back to her little cheeks again until she goes away. Therefore, for every reason, we must quite make up our minds to taking, or if we cannot do this, to sending her in six months' time either to school in England or France, whichever you think best.'

'And she is such a good little girl,' said Mrs. Montgomery ; 'not like a spoilt child at all.'

'But it is not good for Hilda,' said her father, 'to have her own way so much, even though her own way seems to be a very good, kind little way to us ; for sooner or later she must be thwarted, and how will she bear thwarting after being spoilt so long?'

'You are quite right,' said her mother, 'and for *her* sake I will make up my mind to it.'

Every day, every hour of Hilda's life had till now been a day, an hour spent happily ; but could this last ? would it be for her good that it should ? Surely not.

'Sufficient for her little day is her good or evil, should this latter have to come ; therefore, perhaps, we should not look on. But all happiness, all our own way is good for none of us ; no childhood is passed without some tear-shedding, some sorrow or disappointment. An uninterrupted childhood of joys would be but a bad training for a useful, holy, self-denying after-life ; therefore we must not even wish that Hilda could have all pleasure.'





CHAPTER V.

IN THE ARBOUR SCHOOL-ROOM.



HE school at Glottis had been built. Hilda's own, only cedar tree had been cut down to help to wainscot it, her father feeling very glad to give his little girl permission to make the generous offer she was so very anxious to make. Hilda's little school had been continued until this one was opened, although, as we can easily imagine, it was carried on less regularly than at first, and sometimes, either because the mistress or the pupils were busy, they only assembled once a week.

But when Glottis school opened, all Hilda's pupils but Nenus went to it. Nenus could not be spared, and Nana, Mrs. Montgomery, and Hilda taught him between them.

Hilda was taken to the opening of the school. She saw the first lesson given there, she heard the first song sung, and she heard also men, women, boys, and girls, right and left, calling the school 'Miss Hilda Cedar Tree School,' by which name it afterwards generally went. The men and boys who had cut down the tree, prepared the wood, and

carried it to the site were those who first fixed upon this name. Hilda enjoyed her visit to the opening very much, and was quite pleased to lose her pupils for them to go to so beautiful a school.

But five months had now passed since Mr. and Mrs. Montgomery had finally settled about Hilda leaving them, and she had known for some time what had been planned for her.

She was to go to a school in Passy, near to Paris, there to be educated. Her father and mother had arranged it all for her, and as they loved her even better than Nana and old Grandfather Charles, it must be for her good, as they told her it was; but every time she thought of all the people, all the animals, all the things to which she would have to say 'Good-bye,' she *was* unhappy.

The school at Passy had been selected because the head governess there (not the proprietress of the school) had been Mrs. Montgomery's own governess, and she knew her to be a very kind and good woman. A Madame Rivière kept the school, with many governesses under her; and as one of them was an English lady, Hilda's own language would not be neglected, whilst she would be learning French very perfectly.

Unfortunately, neither of her parents were able to go to Europe now, therefore it was arranged for Nana to take the child to school, and for both of them, if possible, to pay her a visit in a year's time.

'I'm going away from you, Dora,' Hilda said one day when she and her little sister were alone in the nursery together; 'I'm going right, right away across the sea. Mother showed Nenus in the map to-day where it was,

because he wanted to see. Yes, Baby Dora,' Hilda still called her little sister by that name, 'but you don't seem to mind at all. *I'm going right away* in a big ship, ever so far; and I shan't sleep in a bed next to you any more, or have tea with you, or play, or tell you stories, or *anything*.'

This seemed to bring facts more home to Dora.

'Tooly?' the little girl said.

'Yes, truly; and I shan't be able to lend you my doll, or show you any more pictures, or do one *single* thing,' Hilda continued.

'Quite tooly?' asked the child again.

'Yes,' said Hilda, 'quite truly; and you'll have father, and mother, and Nana, and Grandfather Charles, and everybody, and I shan't have one person.'

'And Jack?' asked Dora, as the big dog now came into the nursery.

'I shan't have him either,' said Hilda, and began to cry.

Dora's sympathy was at last aroused, and caressing her sister, and saying 'Poor Hilda!' she began to cry also, and to say that she would ask Nana to let her go too.

'But Nana can't, because you're too little to go to school. O Dora, I wish I were little like you!' Hilda said, as she kissed her baby sister very affectionately. 'And I've got to go very soon now.'

'You wum?' asked Dora. 'You one—only you?' she meant to say.

'I wum to stay in France alone,' said Hilda. 'Nana will have to come back to you. I don't think you love me, Dora, nearly as much as I love you,' Hilda then went on; 'that's ever so much. How much do you think you love me?'

Dora put both arms very affectionately round Hilda's neck.

'Tell me how much,' said the elder sister.

Dora thought. 'Like dis house,' she answered.

'You darling little thing!' Hilda then said, laughing. 'And I love you like all the houses in St. George.'

'Oh!' said Dora, quite pleased by this assertion,

The conversation was now interrupted by Nana coming into the room. Hilda ran and jumped on to her lap. She was very fond of being nursed.

'What are you hemming, Nana?' the child asked presently; but her nurse would not answer this question.

Her work looked like a handkerchief for the head, but was ever so much too small for any woman, or even girl, to wear, and it matched one of Nana's handkerchiefs.

Exactly two weeks before the day on which it was settled for Hilda to go away she was nine years old, and on the morning of her birthday Nenus came running to one of the windows with a message for her from Nana, who was in the arbour school-room: 'Please, Miss Hilda, cum dere quick—at wance!'

No sun was then shining, so Hilda thought she need not put on a hat, and ran off as quickly as she could with Nenus.

'Quick, quick, Miss Hilda!' he kept saying; 'it too lubly!'

And when Hilda arrived at the arbour she was quite enchanted by what she saw. It was lovely indeed; and whether Nenus was praising Nana's handiwork or his, or both together, the praise was, in either case, richly deserved.

'Oh, thank you, thank you, dear Nana and dear Nenus!' the little girl exclaimed, clapping her hands as she spoke, whilst Nenus went on telling her what he had done all by himself. He had decorated the arbour with ferns and

lovely flowers, and within it lay Nana's birthday present to Hilda—a doll, that was black and unlike any other doll that the child had ever seen before, just like Nana; and dressed like her, with a shawl handkerchief over her shoulders, and the very handkerchief round her head that she wouldn't tell her what she was working; and a necklace like hers, of berries which Nenus had gathered off a tree and 'fetched to' Nana to make the necklace with, as he explained.

Hilda looked first at Nana, then at her doll. It was so kind of the former to think of giving her this beautiful present; and when she went to France she was to take it with her.

Ever so many times Hilda thanked her nurse, and ever so many times she thanked Nenus, who she knew must have taken a long time to make the arbour so very pretty; and it was *so clever* of Nana, she said, to think of a doll like that, and to dress it.

'Oh, dear Nana and dear Nenus,' she said again; 'and dear old Grandfather Charles,' who had picked her a lovely bunch of flowers, which he had put upon the arbour table, with a beautiful pine that he had grown on his ground—and she must leave them all to go to France; and dear father and mother, who had given her a desk, and pretty books, and everything that she could think of, to take with her; and little Dora, who wanted to give her six letters out of her new alphabet box for a birthday present, because she had nothing else to give—oh, she must leave them all! But Hilda could not think of anything sad for long to-day, and Nenus, who was delighted to watch her joy, told Grandfather Charles later how Miss Hilda had kissed his flowers and pine, and summed up everything by adding, 'Miss Hilda no unhappy 'tarl now, but quite happy 'gen.'

‘What do you think I had better call my doll, Nana?’ Hilda asked, as soon as she had run to show it to father and mother, and had come back again into the arbour, bringing Dora with her, whom she had found in another part of the garden with Rebecca.

The nurse did not seem to know at all.

‘It must be a very long name,’ the child then said, ‘because you’ve a long one, and so has Plunkett’s mother, and so have nearly all the people that she’s like. I don’t think she’d care at all for a short name, so of course she must have a long one, mustn’t she?’

Nana said yes; but the question of the name was a very difficult one to decide, and for two or three days everybody was asked to choose the name, but to every name that was chosen Hilda objected for some reason or other.

At last Nana thought of ‘Cleopatra.’

‘That’s the most lovely name she could have!’ Hilda exclaimed, now fully satisfied. ‘And, mother,’ she said a little later, holding, as she spoke, her doll up for her to look at very closely, ‘she does look like that name, too, doesn’t she?’

Mrs. Montgomery smiled, but could not see the likeness. ‘I think, if you want a long name, that is a very good one,’ she answered.

‘I’ve been saying it over and over to myself ever so many times, mother,’ the child then said, ‘and the more I say it the better it sounds every time; and if I don’t want always to say the whole, Nana told me that I can call her “Cleo” for short, and that’s such a pretty name too.’

And thus the important matter of name choosing was brought to a satisfactory end, and Hilda’s doll was called Cleopatra.



CHAPTER VI.

A PRECIOUS LITTLE BOX.

THERE was much to occupy Hilda's attention until the day of parting really came, for there were presents to receive, new and warmer clothes for the voyage to see, and boxes to help to pack ; for Hilda had two boxes all her own, a large and a small one, and in the small box were packed, besides other lately received treasures, Cleopatra's clothes, the top part of it being left for the doll to occupy herself. She had quite a wardrobe of her own, half-a-dozen frocks, half-a-dozen shawl handkerchiefs, the same number of turbans, and three pairs of boots and stockings, a necklace and ear-rings ; and Hilda had packed and repacked these things a dozen times before she could feel satisfied that they would travel safely.

Nana had done a very kind thing in giving Hilda this doll when she did, for during the week before she went away Cleopatra was Hilda's constant companion ; they went together to look at everything for the last time and say 'good-bye,' and Hilda felt now that she would not be

in a strange country quite alone, for Cleopatra was by her endowed with thought, and sense, and feeling, and they would have to be brave together, and comfort one another. Hilda was not exactly this doll's little mother, for she was a grown-up, a Nana-doll; they were 'a sort of friends,' if you can understand how Hilda looked upon her Cleopatra.

Just before starting Cleo was placed safely in the little box, and as this was to be with Nana and Hilda in their cabin, the latter could take her out during the voyage whenever she wished to do so.

Hilda was so fond and so proud of this very small trunk of her very own; and it had straps round it just the same as her large one, and it locked, and the key was kept in her pocket.

The large trunk was to go into the hold of the ship, as it would not be required during the voyage.

The clothes that Hilda would need on board were in Nana's cabin-box, the only box that Nana took at all; for as she was only to stay in France long enough to purchase some things for Hilda, Dora, and their parents, and then to return to Grenada by the next vessel that came out, she would not require much luggage herself, and was to buy a trunk in Paris the size that she would need for the homeward journey. Then there was Hilda's bird-cage. The little girl had a bird that had once fallen out of a nest and broken its leg. The leg had been set, and made well again, after which accident the little bird had grown quite tame, and would not fly away. Hilda begged very hard to be allowed to take this bird with her, and her father had said that she might do so, on condition that she would be

quite willing to let Nana bring it back should Madame Rivière object to its remaining at the school.

Hilda had so many 'good-byes' to say, that she hardly knew where to begin to say them.

She had kissed the horses, the dogs, the cows, some of the best fowls, and the flowers, the night before, she told Nana when she went to bed, so as not to forget any of them.

Her father was to go on board to see her off; her mother was not quite strong enough for this, so she kissed mother last of all before starting, little Dora last but one.

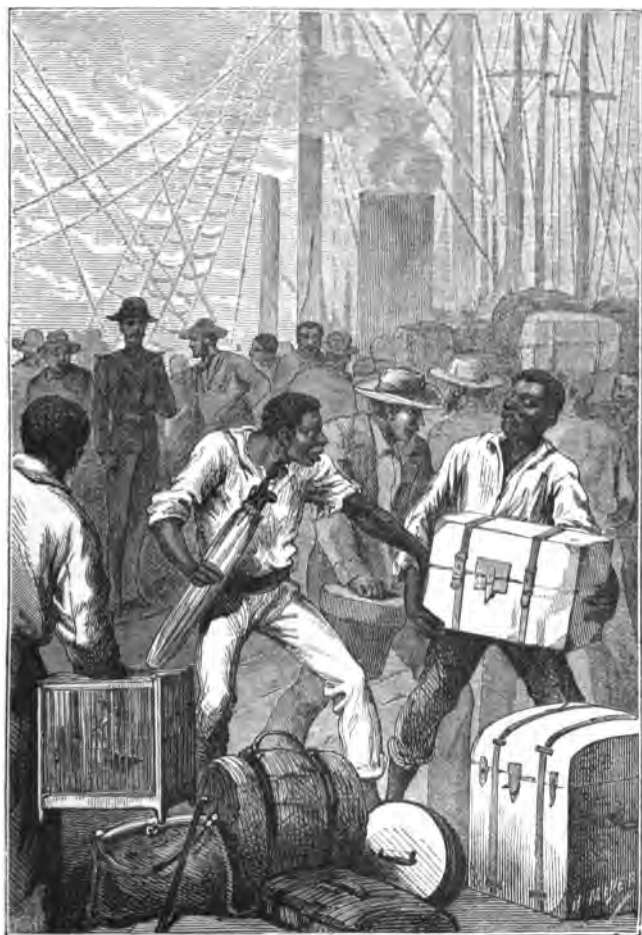
The child could not speak when she embraced her mother, whose own tears helped her to realize what parting for a long time meant.

'God bless my own little Hilda!' she whispered. 'Be a dear, good child, always obedient, always truthful, and say your prayers very reverently and regularly;' her mother would have added, 'And be very kind and loving, Hilda,' but this warning did not seem necessary, as Hilda's little heart seemed ready to overflow with love.

'God be with my precious darling!' her mother said again, as for the last time she kissed her little one, who was then lifted into her father's strong arms and carried away.

Old Grandfather Charles and Nenus went to the wharf to see little Miss Hilda start, so did many other of her native friends, and most of them, including old Charles, walked all the way, although the wharf was several miles from home. Many black people are wonderful walkers, and old black people are often very strong.

Hilda was on board, and missing her little box, she begged old grandfather to go and look for it for her, as she wanted



TO BE PASSED THROUGH THE CUSTOMS.

to have it with her all the time. He then asked a native sailor, whom he knew, to get it for him. It so happened that Nana had already asked another man to look after it for her, so, as native boatmen object very strongly to be interfered with, and both these men thought that it was their duty to look after the little box put under their special charge, there was quite a scuffle between them. The man who had it first retained possession of it, and carried it down into the cabin that Mr. Montgomery had selected for Nana and Hilda, and which he was then showing to old Charles and Nenus, who, never having been on board a large ship before, thought it a very wonderful sight. Hilda could not care about anything until her little box was in her own possession once more, and then she was astonished, with the rest, that a ship that was to sail upon the sea could be half as large as was this one.

Very safely the little trunk now travelled in the cabin to its journey's end, but when the steamer landed at the French port a similar contention took place between the two sailors as had taken place before the vessel started. Both men wished to oblige Nana and the little girl by carrying the box on deck and looking after it, and neither of the sailors who were disputing about it saw the Custom-house officer at that moment come on board to examine the passengers' luggage. Hilda could not think what was to be done with her treasures when her little key was demanded and her box looked into, but she felt very much relieved when the grand-looking officer smiled and said that would do, they could close it again, without taking out her doll at all.

Hilda's little trunk seemed of great importance ;—but we

are getting on too quickly with our story, and now that we are assured of its safety, must go back again to the beginning of the voyage that Hilda has to make.

The little girl held her father's hand tighter and tighter, as minute after minute slipping by brought that moment ever nearer which was to separate them, as though by a yet firmer grasp the little fingers would detain him prisoner ; but at last the dreadful moment came, and Hilda said 'good-bye' to father, and a last 'good-bye' to Grenada, her very happy little island home.





CHAPTER VII.

THE COMPACT WITH THE CAPTAIN.

YOU shouldn't look so unhappy, my little dear, because you've your nurse with you,' said the kind captain of the vessel some days after Hilda had been at sea, and still wore the very sad expression on her little face that had come over it when father wished her 'good-bye.' 'And I've known some little girls,' the old man went on, 'go right away to England and France to school without anybody to go with them even.'

'Who took care of them, then?' asked Hilda.

'I did partly, and partly they took care of themselves.'

'But you've your ship to take care of, haven't you?'

'Yes; but I could look after them too.'

'They couldn't have liked it much to come alone,' Hilda muttered very mournfully.

'I have some little girls at home,' the captain then said, drawing the child between his knees as he spoke, and very kindly taking one of her little hands in his, 'and I have to leave them behind every time I come to sea; but they try to make themselves happy at school without me.'

‘How old are they?’ asked Hilda.

‘One is twelve, another ten, and the third nine years old.’

‘And I’m nine too. But does their mother live with them?’

‘They haven’t a mother,’ he answered; ‘they’ve only their old father, and as he’s nearly always at sea they very seldom see him.’

‘I’m so sorry for them,’ said the child. ‘I’ve a mother, you know, but she’s farther away even than where this ship started from; and everybody’s there, father, mother, Dora, Grandfather Charles, and Nenus, and the school arbour. Nothing’s come with me, only Nana; but she’s going back, because father’s taken her a return ticket; and oh’—Hilda had nearly forgotten her—‘will you please, Nana,’ she asked, looking round at her nurse, who was standing behind her, ‘if you don’t mind, just fetch Cleopatra for the captain to see, as I think he’d like to see her very much, and I expect your little girls would too,’ she continued, talking to the captain again. ‘Have they ever been to Grenada?’

‘No, never; they have never left England.’

‘I wish they were at school in Passy instead of England,’ Hilda then said; ‘because I am going to Passy, and I might know them if they were, and then I could show them my doll, and let them nurse her. Mother says most likely there won’t be another doll like mine in the whole of Passy. Nana gave her to me, and Dora wanted to put her on a hat, but of course she doesn’t wear hats, does she, Nana?’ the child continued, addressing her nurse again, who, then returning with the doll, handed it to the child to give to the captain to admire.

Hilda, it seemed, expected the captain to know all about Dora and Nenus, and everybody in Grenada.



“‘I’M SO SORRY FOR THEM,” SAID THE CHILD.’



'Do you ever write to your children?' she then asked, giving Cleo back to Nana to put safely away once more. 'I have a desk in my little box, with paper and envelopes, and money to buy stamps to post them with, and I am to write to father or mother every mail.'

'My little ones can't well write to me,' said the old man, 'because I might be gone from any place before their letters came, and I haven't very much time to write to them either.'

'But I'm very sorry their mother is dead,' said Hilda gravely; 'for *she* might be able to write to them sometimes, and then they could count the months till they saw her again, like Nana said I could do at school, but they can't now. What are their names?' she then added quickly; 'I forgot to ask before.'

'Mary, Constance, and Clara,' the captain replied; but though Hilda had not meant to do so, she had made him very sad by talking so much about his children's mother, and now she saw him wipe a tear from his eye.

'I'm so sorry,' she said, as, understanding why he was sad, she put one of her arms round his neck, and then whispered, 'She's very happy, you know, so you must be happy too. A lady died in Grenada a little while ago, and then father told mother, when she was crying, that she was better off, because she had gone to God; so you won't be unhappy, will you?' Hilda begged.

'Not if you won't be. Come, little woman, there's a compact,' said the good captain, brightening up. 'We've both something to make us unhappy, and we'll both try to be happy and comfort one another, shall we? I think

that will be capital, and whoever looks unhappy first shall be'—

'Thrown overboard,' said Hilda, and burst out laughing; 'but that wouldn't do,' she continued, 'because if we threw you overboard the ship wouldn't get on properly. Well, then, but what *could* our punishment be?' she added, now quite amused.

'To be left on deck at dinner-time for two days when everybody else goes down to dinner.'

'I shouldn't like that much, captain; should you?'

'No; so I am going to try to look very happy,' and so saying he jumped up and ran away. He had no more time to spare the little girl now; and calling to Nana, who was standing a little apart, to look well after his little passenger, he hurried off to fulfil his duties.

'What a kind man he is,' the child said, as she watched him out of sight, 'to come and talk all this nice long time to me. But, Nana, did you see him laugh at Cleopatra? That's why I gave her back to you so quickly, and didn't once ask him if he liked her. She looks quite real, doesn't she?'

'Quite real, Miss Hilda. P'raps dat what mek de captain laugh.'

'Nana,' she then said, 'what do you think everybody's doing now—father, mother, and all of them? Shall we try to think?'

They agreed to do so, but could not at all make sure what Hilda's parents and Mr. Fowler were doing—only Grandfather Charles, Dora, Nenus, and all the boys and girls that were at school. Grandfather Charles, they decided, had just finished some of his work, and was resting; Nenus

was planting some seeds in Hilda's garden ; Dora was crying for Hilda and Nana ; and the children at school were having different lessons—Plunkett's class a geography one.

'Poor little Dora !' then said Hilda. 'Nana, when you go back again, I want you, please, to take a number of presents with you for me ; will you, please ? You know I've some more money besides the postage-stamp money, and when we get to France I want to buy something for you to take to everybody. I've been trying to think what to get, but I couldn't think very well till I see the stores, could I ? Perhaps Dora would like a French doll, and old grandfather might like a pretty bow for Sundays, and Nenus would like anything there is, and Plunkett wants a map of his own to see often the way I've come ; but if he does see it on the map, he'd never think how far it is to take all this time, would he ? I never thought it was anything like so far. Of course there's much more water than land ; that's very easy to see now, isn't it ? And, Nana, don't you think I could send Jack and Lion a collar each ?' Lion was another large dog belonging to Mr. Montgomery. 'And Pepper must have something ;' Pepper was Hilda's pony. 'I think he'd like a very pretty new saddle-cloth ; and then when Dora rides Pepper it would look pretty, wouldn't it ? And then, Nana, I want to give you a beautiful present too, because you gave me such a very lovely one ; but as I shan't have money enough to buy a nearly good enough one for you when I've bought father's and mother's and all, I'm going to give you something that's mine now, and that you like very much, and you must always wear it. I've been thinking about this a long time, because mother gave this present to me, and so I didn't like at first to make up my mind, but it's quite made up now ;

and as mother has given me ever so many things, she wouldn't mind your having this one at all, I'm sure ; so I'm going to give you my cross, Nana, and then you can't forget me ; and if you always wear it,—and you will, won't you?—if I didn't see you again till you were as old as old Charles even, I should be sure to know you again, because you'd have it on.'

'Nana no take dat,' said the woman.

'Oh, but you must,' answered the child ; 'and when you get back to Grenada, you'll tell mother that I gave it you, because I loved you so much, and couldn't buy you anything good enough, won't you?' But then Hilda could say no more.

She began to wish so heartily again that she were going back with Nana to her mother and father, to take them the presents herself ; she began to picture her nurse starting and leaving her behind alone, and then she cried ; but the next moment she heard a little whistle, and looking up she saw her friend the captain standing opposite to her, smiling and calling out, 'No dinner for *six* days if *that* little face remains.'

He then beckoned to Hilda to come and help him look through his telescope at a ship in the distance, and she, putting on her hat, which Nana had brought up when she took the doll down, and was holding for her because she did not like to wear it too long, ran to the captain with great delight, with whom she remained for the next hour, and there were no more tears that day.





CHAPTER VIII.

GRANDFATHER CHARLES.

IT was as though all sunshine had fled from Belvidere, as though a very heavy cloud hung over the place, when little Miss Hilda went away.

Mr. and Mrs. Montgomery missed sorely their bright little pet about the house ; little Dora, for the first two or three days, was almost inconsolable without either Nana or Hilda, and could not understand why they need have gone away. She ran into the nursery time after time to call her nurse, always forgetting that her mother had said she would not come back yet a while ; and Jack went very often with her to look for Hilda.

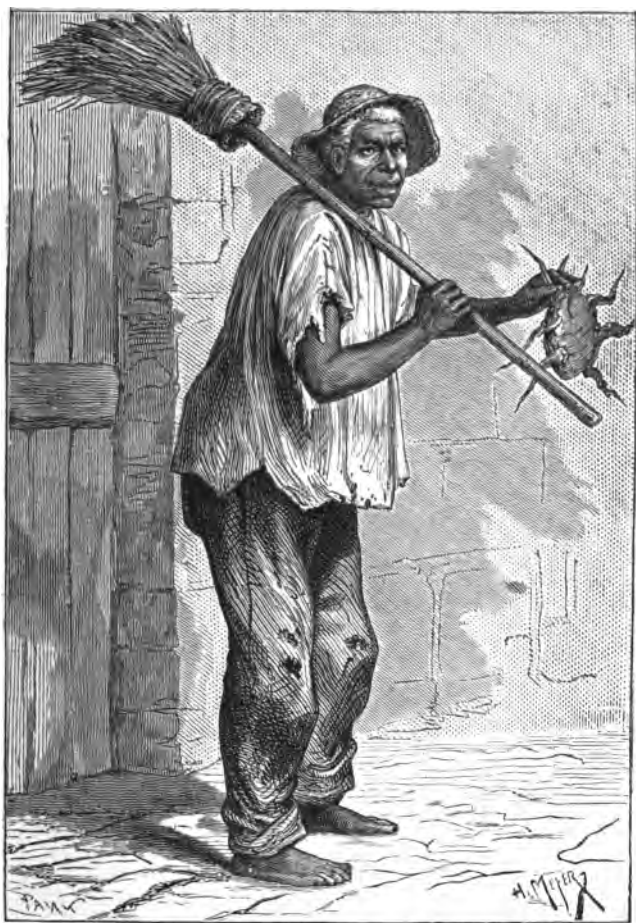
Old Grandfather Charles felt as though he could never be happy again.

'Little Miss Hilda garn right 'way fram we,' he said several times, 'an' may be old Charl' neber, neber more see her, till one day, please God, dem meet up dere,' and he pointed towards the sky. It was no wonder that the poor old man missed this little girl so very much.

All her new picture-books, as they came out from England, Hilda had shown to old grandfather. He could not read one word, but he had liked the pictures, and she had explained them to him on Sunday; and many a Sunday he had dressed himself a second time (for old grandfather went to church in the morning, but could not afford to keep on his good clothes when he came home), and had begged Nana, 'Please let him go small walk by river-side with her and two little missis;' and then Hilda, on these happy Sunday afternoons for old Charles, had tried to make up to him a little bit what he lost by not being able to read, by taking out her Bible picture and other stories, and reading them out loud to him.

One day she had asked permission of her mother to tear out of her book a very favourite picture of the old man's to give to him, because she knew this picture now quite by heart, and could read about it when it was gone, but he couldn't ever read anything; and the permission had been granted to Hilda, and then the picture was given and pinned up on old grandfather's wall, where it was often looked at by him. This was a very beautiful picture of the crucifixion.

During almost every day of the working week Hilda, some time or other, had visited the stables and the kennels with old Charles; and many a day had she suddenly run to him across the yard, to beg for a pinafore-ful of corn for some hen which she had just seen run into the yard, and which she was quite sure had not come to be fed in the early morning, so was very hungry now; and old Charles never refused Miss Hilda the corn, as he knew that she was always up in the early morning to help the fowl-girl feed



“GO CARRY IT, OLE GRANDFATHER, WHERE IT NO FINE NO HURT.”



the poultry, and did not often make a mistake about the then absentees. In all these ways the old man now missed the child, and it was no wonder that he could not forget one by whom he had never been forgotten.

If she had a box of sweets brought to her from town, old grandfather, she knew, liked sweets very much, and therefore some were always put aside for him.

His teeth were not good now, and if Hilda had cake for tea, this was soft, and some of it must be saved for him.

In a dozen ways he had been remembered by his little missis, and how could he now do otherwise than always remember her?

‘Are you very happy, old Charles?’ the little girl would sometimes ask when she saw him smiling at his work; and then he would look up and answer very readily, ‘Oh yes, Miss Hilda, de ole man well happy now; no more fum-fum, no more foo-foo any more.’ And this he would explain to mean no more whip or lash, like in the old-time slavery days. This seemed to be a very favourite saying of old Charles’, and one quite peculiar to himself; and Hilda liked so much to hear him say these words, that she often put the same question, knowing that always the very same answer would come.

But Grandfather Charles had been very fortunate in having had, even in slavery time, some of the best of masters. Still the old man loved very dearly his freedom, and would tell the little girl, as she sometimes worked for fun beside him in the garden, she with her play-broom, he with his real one, many an interesting story of Emancipation time in 1838.

He listened now in vain for the sound of the little voice, the little footsteps, that for so many years had from time to

time made very light hard work for him, and then he would wipe his eyes, whilst he swept, weeded, or did whatever else he had to do in a very sorrowful manner. But his good master and mistress set him an example of resignation, therefore he tried to be resigned too. They missed dreadfully their little daughter, this he knew, and yet they fulfilled faithfully each and every one of their several duties without complaining, putting on, too, a cheerful manner the while.

Old grandfather was one day sweeping out the yard and garden, when he suddenly stopped still. He had nearly put his foot upon something, when it made a movement, and thus led him to discover that it had life. He could not tell what the creature was, nor how it had come here, but lifting it up very carefully, and at the same time putting his broom on his shoulder, old grandfather carried it away, muttering as he went these words over and over again, as though he could not say them too often, 'If Miss Hilda here help me clear up wid him little play-broom, him say, "Go carry it, ole grandfather, where it no fine no hurt,"' and the old man did not rest until he had found a spot to put the living thing where it would make itself at home and find no hurt at all.

Lessons of kindness that Hilda had taught had been learnt even better by this grandfather in his old age than by either Plunkett or Nenus.

If Hilda had not taught this lesson to old Charles, he would no doubt have said, as many of his race unfortunately often say of creatures that have life, 'him no feel,' and would perhaps have wantonly injured, and then have left a living, feeling thing gradually, in pain, to die.



CHAPTER IX.

SCHOOL.

WHEN Hilda and her Nana arrived in Paris, they were met by the English governess of the school in Passy, and conducted thither by her. Very nervously and timidly the child passed through the large school gates, hand in hand with her nurse. The high walls round the school, the large gates in the walls, had to her a most dreary, prison-like look, and she could not bear the thought of Nana leaving her here.

As they rang the bell, which almost frightened Hilda with its depth of sound, an old woman, or portress, who was called the *concièrge*, opened the gates and admitted them. This old woman lived in a lodge belonging to the school just within the gates.

They were then led up a stone-paved walk, through a square room or passage, into a large reception-room, in the very large school-building; and the head governess, Mademoiselle L'Herbier, Mrs. Montgomery's old friend, came to welcome the new little pupil, and introduce her to Madame.

She spoke very kindly to Hilda, asked most affectionately after her mother, and then took the little girl into her dormitory, bidding Nana to follow and see where she would sleep.

Twenty beds were in this dormitory, and Hilda was very glad when she was told that a little English girl would sleep beside her.

Mademoiselle had kindly arranged this to please the child. Leading out of the dormitory was the lavatory, where the girls washed. Cupboards were in the walls of the dormitory, and in one of these Mademoiselle said that Hilda might keep her little box, when she heard what it contained. Nana had taken charge of it since they had left the ship.

The nurse then delivered messages that she had brought from Grenada. A long letter, full of anxious entreaties for the child to be well looked after and cared for, had arrived by post. One of the messages was that, if Hilda made friends or acquaintances of whom Madame Rivière or Mademoiselle L'Herbier approved, her father would like her to be allowed to visit them on her holidays, should they wish her to do so.

It was Wednesday when Hilda arrived at school. The next day, Thursday, was the whole holiday, so on that day Nana was told that she could return early in the afternoon to take the child out shopping, when a servant, who understood well where they should make their purchases in Paris, should go with them. As Nana was quite strange to the place, Mademoiselle L'Herbier asked a lady friend kindly to put her up at her house until Monday morning, when she was to leave Paris altogether; and this she was good enough to do.

On Thursday afternoon Nana and Hilda did much shopping, but a good deal still remained to be done ; and as Hilda's was an exceptional case, Nana was allowed to return on Friday and Saturday afternoon again for the little girl to go out with her. And now, they said, they knew their way alone, and taking the omnibus to Paris, they reached the Louvre in time, there to shop to their hearts' content. It was a very pretty drive by omnibus along the banks of the river Seine. When they had made all their purchases, they looked in at the various shop windows until it was time to return again to Passy.

All Hilda's presents had been bought and given to her nurse to carry back to Grenada for her, with her dearest love ; and as Nana left the little girl once more at the school on Saturday afternoon, the child took her cross from off her neck and tied it upon Nana's, saying that she *must* have that for her keepsake. Then, in loneliness and solitariness, poor Nana wended her way back to the house of the kind friend of Mademoiselle L'Herbier, who was giving her a shelter.

On Sunday morning she was to see Hilda in the English church, in the afternoon she was to come to school for the last time to wish her 'good-bye,' and then start very early on Monday morning on her return journey.

As no birds were allowed to be kept at school, the little pet had at once been taken away by Nana, for which Hilda was very sorry.


She told her nurse on Saturday afternoon that she could not bear school, and that she was very, very unhappy here ; when Nana had answered that she felt strange now, and would, no doubt, soon like it. But although the good

woman really believed that when the child became known at school she would be beloved as she had been in Grenada, she could not help feeling very sad on board ship when she pictured to herself the tear-stained, sorrowful little face that had last looked up to say 'good-bye' to her; and then Nana felt quite angry with the high walls and massive gates that shut this wild, joyous, freedom-loving, happy child within the precincts of a school.

Hilda was very shy at first—very, very shy, and seemed afraid of everybody but Mademoiselle L'Herbier. There were a great many girls in the school, 150 in all, and out of these only ten were English; and the French girls stared at her, and made remarks about her in their language that she could not understand.

The Monday after Hilda had gone to school she crept into a corner of one of the school-rooms, and there cried, wishing so much that there were no France, no school in Passy, no French girls, nothing and nobody but Grenada, and all the dear people there, and that she had never come to school or to France at all. It did not seem half so dreadful until Nana had really gone away.

The English governess had spoken very kindly to Hilda when she took her, with the other English girls, on Sunday to the English church; but the child had then thought so much about Nana, and how it was the last day she would see her, that she hardly heard what the lady said. The little English girl who walked with Hilda also tried to draw her into conversation; but when she hardly answered her either, because she was too sorrowful to hear what she said, she was supposed to be disagreeable, and her little companion then left off trying to make her talk.



School life in Passy was very different, in every respect but one, from that life to which Hilda had always been accustomed in Grenada, and the one exception was that the girls rose early.

Some of them thought that they went very early to bed, but as they did not go until between eight and nine o'clock, this was really late for Hilda.

The children rose in the summer at half-past six, and had an hour's lessons before their first breakfast, which consisted of coffee and roll and butter. Then followed school till twelve o'clock, when the girls went to their second *déjeuner*. Then they had cold meat, bread, and salad.

After this meal came recreation for an hour in the large school grounds when the weather was fine, and in the recreation-room when this was not the case. After recreation, lessons were learnt again. At four they had some bread ; but this was quickly eaten, and lessons were continued until within a short time of the dinner dressing-bell being rung, when they went into the garden once more until this sounded.

Six o'clock was the dinner-hour, and the mistresses and pupils dined together in a large dining-room, where were many tables. The English girls all sat together. The furniture in this room was principally of unpolished, carved oak ; the high-backed chairs on which the girls sat were of cane. The dinner now consisted of soup, meat, and pudding ; sometimes also of dessert. After dinner was recreation-time again for half an hour. During recreation, they walked about the garden, skipped, and played all sorts of round games ; but skipping was their chief amusement, and this the French girls of all ages did to perfection.

There were French prayers morning and evening for the French girls, and English prayers for the English, which the latter said with their governess.

There was one whole holiday a week on Thursdays, on which day the children might go out, if their friends fetched them, from three to six o'clock in the afternoon. With this exception, they never went out of doors during the week. On Sundays they went to church, the English girls to the English church with their English governess; and once a fortnight, if the children had behaved themselves well, they were allowed to visit their parents or friends, from Saturday till Monday.

Their friends were allowed to visit them at school on Thursday and Saturday afternoons.

The girls dressed in uniform, and wore in school black cotton frocks, with very prettily made, large, black cotton pinafores over them. The pinafores they took off for dinner.

Hilda was quick at learning languages, and as her mother, who was a very good French scholar, had lately taken great pains to teach her the rudiments of that language, she was soon able to take her place in class with some of the younger French children.

But meanwhile she felt terribly lonely in the midst of a crowd of children, as they seemed to her; she missed her freedom sorely, and the great love that had been lavished upon her by so many in Grenada, and she often tried to hide herself, where she could cry all alone, and no one see her.

On Monday night, when Hilda went to bed, she could not get to sleep; it seemed such a dreadful thought that even Nana now was no longer near her. She began to think of

the long sea-voyage that would soon separate her from her nurse, as it had separated her from everybody else whom she loved ; and when she told herself that not *one* person she knew was anywhere near her, the unhappy little Hilda wept for a long, long time that night.

There were strict orders not to speak in the dormitories, therefore no one had said one word to Hilda when she came to bed ; but nearly an hour after most of the children were fast asleep, she felt a kiss upon her little burning cheek, and heard a little voice close beside her whisper, ' Don't cry, Hilda ; I'll be your friend if you like, and we'll have all sorts of games together.'

It was an English child, who spoke in English. This in itself brought Hilda some comfort, for she had grown tired to-day of hearing so much French, one quarter of which she could not understand at all. ' French, French, French, all day long,' she said to herself, as she lay in bed enumerating her troubles ; ' and no one spoke French in Grenada, and Cleopatra would not know anything about that language !' She had not yet once opened her little box since she came to school. The little girl who now spoke to Hilda was not the one who had walked to church with her yesterday—that was Amy Dawson ; not the one who slept in the bed next to her, her name was Janet Percival ; but little Mary Scott, a kind-hearted, affectionate little child, who slept four beds away from Hilda, but could not sleep at all to-night because of her crying.

She was a shy little thing, and as long as the other girls had been about could not summon up courage to speak to the ' new little girl ;' but now when everybody else slept, and she could hear that Hilda sorely needed comfort, she stole

out of bed to carry it to her ; and only Hilda knew what real comfort those few kind words brought to her, what a sense of security the sympathy expressed in the little voice conveyed, what a lonely void in a very sorrowful little heart was filled up, as, returning the kiss of the little girl, who now crept back quietly to her bed for fear of disturbing the others, she turned her weary little head over on her pillow, and in less than two minutes was fast asleep.

Mary or Dolly Scott, as this little girl was often called at school as well as at home (this having always been her pet name, and a little friend coming to school at the same time with her, and calling her by it, thus introducing it amongst the girls), was eight years old, one year younger than Hilda, but still younger looking, as she was short for her age.





CHAPTER X.

CLEOPATRA.

HILDA, to use her father's own words, had already *begun to find her level*. She was no longer the one to be singled out, petted, waited upon, and spoilt; but amongst one hundred and fifty girls she took her place, and that place often a lowly one. Many of the French girls made fun of her shyness, and were anything but well or kindly behaved towards the little foreigner, and Hilda, consequently, did not like them in return.

The difference of character between the hundred and fifty girls here at school together was very great. Some acted on principle, whilst others seemed to have no principle on which to act; some were passionate, some ill-natured and horribly contradictory, some spiteful, some sly; many, especially the French girls,—but of course there were so many more of these than of the English,—very untruthful; some wrapped up in self, constantly talking about themselves, and saying unkind, cutting things to wound the feelings of others; some again were greedy, which is a very ugly fault. But

then others were good-natured, good-tempered, kind-hearted, truthful, and unselfish girls ; and amongst the good in general may perhaps especially rank Clochette d'Aubignier, a French girl of eleven years old, and little Dolly Scott.

Hilda's awakening on the first few mornings after she came to school was very sad. She was so much accustomed to see Nana's face and hear her voice directly she awoke, that she naturally missed both very much when she could no longer see nor hear them ; and then there was the strange getting up in a strange new home and country, and the strange going down to a strange new round of duties.

The first thing that Hilda did on Tuesday morning was to look for her newly-found friend of the night before, whom she recognised by a kind little smile that greeted her.

When recreation-time came after dinner, these two little girls met, played together, and thus cemented their friendship ; and whilst they were playing, Hilda told Mary Scott that she had a doll in her box in the dormitory that she had wanted to look at ever since she had come to school, but had been afraid, and that she would like very much now to show the doll to her. This was the first secret that Hilda had told at school ; and when she described the doll, and the number of clothes which its trunk contained, and the necklace and the ear-rings, little Mary longed to see it, but she said that they must get special permission to play with the doll on any day but Thursday and Saturday.

They asked this special leave, and Hilda being a new child, whose parents were so far away from her, the leave was granted, and very happily the little girl set off to fetch the doll.

Hilda was very glad to hold her in her arms once more ;

and her little friend was quite lost in astonishment when she saw Cleopatra. She thought she had never seen so funny looking a doll before.

‘Isn’t she pretty?’ asked Hilda.

The other could not answer ‘yes’ to this question, but said that she would like to nurse her very much, if she might.

Hilda allowed her to do so, also to take off her turban, and see how it was put on.

The two children had run to a pretty, little, sheltered spot in the garden underneath some trees. Here were two seats and a table, and as the other girls were all very busy at play in other parts of the garden, Hilda and her little companion were not observed by them. They did not, however, sit down long, Dolly knowing that they were not allowed to do so in recreation-time, but walked backwards and forwards underneath some trees.

When it was time to go in, Hilda carried Cleopatra herself. She had been very unselfish in lending her a great deal to Dolly, but she wanted particularly to carry her home; and as she now went along expecting all the girls she met, and passed on the way, to notice and admire Cleopatra as much as she admired her herself, what was her disappointment and vexation when ever so many girls burst out laughing at the doll, called after her and Hilda, and pointing at Cleopatra, made all sorts of unkind remarks!

The governess who was out with the girls told them to be quiet, but they did not hearken much to what she said, and she herself smiled at the strange-looking doll that the little English child held so lovingly in her arms.

This, and the girls’ unkindness, made Hilda feel very

angry, yes very angry, almost for the very first time in her life. She did not like her school-fellows at all, she said to herself; she would never like them, she could not bear them, they were very horrid, unkind girls, and she did not want to like them.

Poor little Hilda! Everybody in Grenada had said what a loving little creature she was; and they had said correctly, for it was Hilda's very nature to be loving; but she had never really been tempted to be otherwise before, and now when this temptation came she was completely overcome.

'They shall never, never, *never* see my doll once again!' Hilda said, as she laid the unconscious victim to ridicule to rest in her little trunk-bed; 'never, never, never!' And all day long Hilda could not once forget how unkind the girls had been; and when she went to prayers in the evening she still remembered it, and could not half join in them because of the anger at her little heart; and she magnified even to herself, by continually brooding over them, the insults that she felt had been heaped upon Cleopatra.

The next morning, during first recreation, she met a friend to whom she poured out her griefs. Dolly she had not seen to speak to since the day before. The friend whom she now met was Turc, the large dog belonging to the old woman, or *concièrge*, at the lodge. Hilda was sitting for a few minutes on the same seat under the tree where she had sat yesterday so happily nursing her doll, thinking over her troubles, when Turc walked up and looked at her.

The child had only seen this dog once before, but she had then at once run towards and patted him, feeling very glad to see a dog that reminded her of Jack. He now

seemed to remember Hilda, or else he, with his wonderful dog-instinct, recognised in her a loving little friend to dogs, and therefore sought to know her better.

Anyhow, he now came up to Hilda just at the right moment, when she was wanting a friend to comfort her, and resting his chin upon her lap, he invited her to pat him.

She did not feel alone any longer. It was as though Jack had come from Grenada to see her ; and now she could tell the dog all that the unkind girls had done.

‘You know, Turc,’ she said, the girls had told her the dog’s name, ‘I’m dreadfully unhappy, as unhappy as I can be, because they nearly all tease Cleopatra ; only Dolly doesn’t and Clochette.’ Clochette had already twice spoken very gently to Hilda, and the kind notice from an elder French girl had not been lost upon the child.

‘You won’t understand about it, I expect, but I love Cleo better than anything in the whole of France (and France is much bigger even than Paris, you know, where Nana and I went to the shops), because my home is in Grenada, and that’s right across the sea, where Nana’s gone back to, and where I came from and Cleo ; and Jack’s there, and people dress like Cleo in Grenada, but they don’t here, and so the girls laughed at her. Oh, Turc,’ Hilda went on, ‘I wish you knew Jack ! don’t you ? And now,’ she continued, changing her tone of voice with every change of subject, ‘they laugh at Cleo, and say she’s ugly ; and call her a horrid black thing, and all sorts of names ; and say they wouldn’t own such a doll ; and she’s just like Nana,’ Hilda added, as she wiped tears from her eyes ; ‘and Nana gave her to me, and I do love her so much,’ and then, as if to show Turc what love meant, Hilda put both her little arms

round his neck and kissed him, thus trying to explain its meaning to him.

He seemed to understand this part of her story, at all events, for he now licked both her hands in return.

'Wouldn't you be sorry, Turc,' Hilda began again, 'if you loved anything better than anything there was, and they laughed at it, and called it names? I know you would ; and I can't even think when I can play with Cleo again, because I expect they'll laugh then and every time I do. Oh, it is, it *is* unkind of them !'

Turc only wagged his tail to show that he approved very much of being petted all this long time by Hilda. She then rose from her seat, walked about the grounds, and Turc followed her for quite ten minutes, until it was time for her to go in. She had found another friend. Hilda must not complain.

Nana had not yet been gone two days, and she had made two good friends, little Mary Scott and Turc, and she was fairly on her way to make another in Clochette ; but unfortunately she had made some enemies too, and unhappily had admitted a very ugly enemy into her heart for the first time, one who bore two ugly names, and these were 'unforgiving anger.'





CHAPTER XI.

TURC'S EXAMPLE.

AS time wore on Hilda became more and more accustomed to the routine of school-life, and she was really very fond of her lessons, especially of geography, that spoke to her so much of home.

Hilda had often thought of that funny geography lesson she had given in the bush, when she had imagined that her one large map of Europe took in all the smaller maps in her atlas, and had looked in vain there for Grenada. How often she had found this island since then ! how well she knew its exact longitude and latitude now ! how she would point it out to Dolly almost at every geography-lesson, and say, ' There's my home, where I came from ; quite near, you see, to South America, between the island of Tobago and the Grenadines ! It is so pretty there ! '

One day the geography-lesson was on Greece, and whilst the other girls were learning of Corinth, Mount Parnassus, and Vale of Tempe, and associating them only with Greece, the little Grenadian was remembering how her

home was also in a Vale of Tempe, and how a Corinth and Parnassus were in Grenada also. This island was so small, and Hilda had so often heard the names of these places, that she could never forget them.

But although Hilda was happy at her lessons, she was not happy at everything. Her school-fellows had found out her weak point, she could not endure to be teased ; they had also found out what teased her most, and there were few girls now before whom Hilda ever cared to produce her doll. She had said that she would never let them look at her again ; but when they had begged her very hard to let them do so, she had one day given in, and then they had laughed at her once more.

Again Hilda declared, as she locked her Cleo away, that those disagreeable girls should never, never look at her once more ; and because she would not put up at all with Cleo's being laughed at, she punished herself sometimes for weeks together, by seldom even having a glance at her dear doll. And more and more did the child dislike those of her school-fellows who made fun of her doll, till she, who had never known any other feeling than love, hated, yes, really hated the girls who were so unkind.

Every other Saturday was her favourite day, because then many of the girls went away till Monday ; and if it so happened that her tormentors were of this number, she would then manage in the afternoon to find an opportunity to play with her doll. It seems very hard that the unkindness of some of her school-fellows should have debarred poor Hilda from the companionship of the doll, to which she had once looked forward as her greatest solace when they should both be in a strange country together.

Early on Thursday mornings, the whole holiday, the English clergyman generally came to give the English girls a Scripture-lesson. Hilda liked this very much, and he, knowing that this little girl was very far away from home and parents, had several times asked special leave to take her home with him to spend the rest of the day.

The girls were not allowed out on Thursdays until three o'clock, but as Hilda's home was so far away, and the clergyman himself asked for the child to be allowed to go, if she had been good the permission was generally given.

It was a great treat and change for Hilda to go here for a little while, and although Mr. and Mrs. Stacey had no children of their own with whom she could play, she found plenty of things to amuse her; and they would sometimes take her for a walk or a drive in the Bois de Boulogne, a very, very large garden, wood, and promenade, one of the entrances to which, Porte La Muette, was close by their house.

But often during these visits her kind friends would notice that the child would seem to be distracted, when she would suddenly put her hand into her pocket, and if she did not there find that for which she looked, an anxious expression would come across her face, all enjoyment for the day was gone, and she would appear eager for the time to come for her to return to school. She had never mentioned her Nana-doll to Mrs. Stacey, nor the little box in which she and her wardrobe were kept, therefore this lady could not guess that it was for a key to open it that she felt in her pocket, and the absence of this key that caused so great anxiety; because Hilda feared that it might have been left in the box, and that some of the girls would, perhaps, during

her absence take out the doll, and hide or play some other trick upon it. She was unfortunately right in supposing that some of her school-fellows were really naughtily mean enough for this.

Hilda would have acted more wisely to have told her kind friends about the doll of whom she was so fond, because they would no doubt have allowed her to bring it with her to their house, where she could have played long, happily, and unmolested with it. But she had now grown into a habit of never mentioning the doll to any one, for fear that it might, by any possible chance, be made fun of.

Although Hilda loved a few girls very fondly, and was much beloved by them in return, amongst her many school-fellows she was not a general favourite. Some of the girls called her very selfish, for never allowing them to look at or play with Cleo ; and they, thinking the doll a curiosity, were really anxious to see her properly, and nurse her, but Hilda, never forgetting the insults that she felt had been offered to her doll, persistently kept her under lock and key.

Mrs. Montgomery and Nana knew nothing of these troubles of Hilda's, for although she wrote every mail to Grenada, she never mentioned any of her grievances.

Her letters were looked over before they were posted, therefore she did not like to write about poor Cleo ; and as she thought, also, that it would make Nana very unhappy to hear how she was treated, she did not want to mention this.

The general tone of the child's letters was a happy one, for she wrote about her lessons, and these she really liked ; playing at school had given Hilda quite a taste for lessons. She sent messages to old grandfather, and many to Nenus about France, which country he was to look out in a map

till he knew quite well where Paris was ; and she told of her visits to the clergyman's house, of dear Mademoiselle L'Herbier, and of Clochette and Dolly.

So her parents thought that their child was quite happy, and thus a whole year slipped by, and Hilda's birthday came and went again, and she was ten years old.

Mr. and Mrs. Montgomery were still prevented from visiting their child, but they had told her now to look forward to their coming, instead of this, next year to see her.

Dolly's parents lived in England, so she often stayed in school when many of the girls went out. She had some friends with whom she occasionally spent the from Saturday to Monday holiday, but she more often spent it at school. One Saturday to Monday most of the doll-teasing children had been invited out. Hilda and Dolly were very glad of this, for they had promised themselves a long afternoon's play with Hilda's doll. One girl named Mathilde d'Arcier was going out till Monday. This was a very good thing, for Mathilde was the most bitter enemy that poor Cleo had.

The doll was fetched and carried to the shed, to be dressed in another entire suit of clothes, before she was taken for a walk about the grounds.

The new suit had just been put on, when Hilda and Dolly were startled by hearing voices near, and one of the voices that they heard they were sure was Mathilde's.

They quickly tried to hide the doll, but they were too late. Mathilde pounced upon, and snatched it from Hilda.

'So you won't let any of us look at that lovely doll of yours ! we'll just see if we won't,' she exclaimed in French, and so saying ran out of the shed with it, half dragging, half carrying it roughly by one arm.

The shed was a small covered-over spot in the garden, having a wooden ceiling supported by pillars, where was the gymnasium, within which hung ropes and swings, and here, twice a week, the drilling-master gave his lessons.

Hilda had promised Cleo a swing that afternoon ! Outside the shed, just behind a tree, stood many girls, and as Mathilde ran past them they made room for her.

She ran very quickly, but Hilda, who pursued her, ran



quickly too, with her hands stretched out to try to reach her doll.

They were very dreadful moments for Hilda, in which she had to watch her being dragged along in front of her by one of her little arms ; and as she and the girl she was pursuing passed one group of children after another, she ran faster and faster, till at last, when she was so tired that

she felt she could not run any farther, she managed to get near enough to catch hold of one of her doll's legs. Little Mary had started to run too, but could not keep up with Hilda. As the child caught hold of her doll, she tore its leg, and then threw herself down upon the ground to rest and cry over the accident.

'Mathilde's a horrid, horrid girl! and I hate her; yes, I hate her very, very much!' said Hilda again and again, as she gave way to a paroxysm of rage.

Mademoiselle L'Herbier came up as Hilda was saying these words, and in punishment for her temper, sent her in-doors to write out twenty lines. This was a terribly disappointing ending to the afternoon's pleasure, on which Hilda and Dolly had so counted. They quite thought that Mathilde had gone out when they produced the doll, or would not then have produced her. After writing out her lines, Hilda was allowed to play again, but was not allowed to have her doll any more that day. She persisted in saying very, very angry things about Mathilde, and she really felt as angry towards her as it was possible for her to feel.

Poor little Hilda! In Grenada, where everybody had loved her, it had come so very easy to love in return; but now, when Mathilde was so cruel to her and Cleo, it seemed so difficult for her to do anything but hate.

If we are ever tempted to think that we are not guilty of such and such a fault of which some companion seems guilty, let us in humility be thankful that maybe we have never yet been tempted to commit the fault, and beware lest, if we trust in our own strength to stand if assailed by it, we fall as easily as, or more easily even than others.

Clochette joined her little friend later, and whispered in

her ear, 'Never mind, Hilda ; I have been to ask Mademoiselle L'Herbier if I may have your doll to mend the leg, and she's mended it herself, so that's all right now, and you need not be unhappy any longer about it ; and I believe if you were to go and tell Mademoiselle now that you don't hate Mathilde, she would let you have your doll again, and then you and Dolly could go on playing your game. Poor little Dolly has been crying very much because you were punished. Mathilde has had a dreadful punishment herself ; she is not to go out to-day till Monday.'

'Then she will come and tease us again !'

'No, she has been forbidden to come near you.'

Of course all these conversations were held in French ; Hilda now spoke this language very easily.

'But I *do* hate her,' she said, 'and I always mean to.'

Dolly joined them as Hilda spoke these words, and Clochette stopped to say something to another girl.

'We have to forgive, you know, Hilda,' said Dolly, keeping her eyes fixed upon the ground whilst she spoke, as though half afraid to say the words, 'even a big thing like that,' she went on ; 'the Bible says so, don't you remember ?'

Mary Scott was a very good little girl. Hilda paid no heed now to what she said, but as she walked on, stamped her foot very angrily upon the ground. She was not looking where she trod, and suddenly heard a squeal.

Turc had run in front of her, and, without seeing him, she had trodden upon his foot. He turned round quickly, wagged his tail, and licked her hand.

It seemed a small thing, but it made an impression upon Hilda.

'He forgives,' she said, as though speaking to herself; 'but then I expect he knows that I did not mean to hurt him.'

'He's only a dog, and hasn't a soul, and doesn't learn about God,' said Dolly, 'or else I'm sure he'd forgive even if he knew we meant to hurt him; and I believe dogs do forgive like that even now.'

'So they do,' said Hilda thoughtfully. 'I'll try to forgive Mathilde, then; but every time I think of her I can't bear her again, she's so unkind to Cleo.' Hilda persuaded herself that it was because Mathilde was unkind to her doll, not to her at all, that she was so angry with her.

Clochette now joined them.

'I don't want my doll now, thank you,' said Hilda in answer to what Clochette had said before she left them, 'so I'd rather not ask Mademoiselle L'Herbier anything about it; I'd rather only just walk about and think.'

'And we'll walk with you, won't we, Dolly?' asked Clochette.

Of course Dolly intended to do this; and for some time that afternoon four friends walked about the garden together,—three children and a dog, for Turc remained with them until they went indoors. The dog was fond of all these girls, but somehow or other he liked Hilda better than any other pupil at Madame Rivière's school. Hilda did not talk much. She was thinking, but not in the right direction. Every unkindness that Mathilde had ever practised upon her she seemed to remember and brood over to-day; she neither tried to forgive nor to forget, but from time to time, when she looked at Turc, she was very much inclined to be ashamed of herself.



CHAPTER XII.

MATHILDE'S REVENGE.

IT was the twenty-fifth of November,—not only a high holiday and great day for the girls at Madame Rivière's school, but for every girl in every school in France. It was St. Catherine's Day, and this was the French girls' festival of pleasure and rejoicing, the one day in the whole year to which they looked forward with most delight.

At Madame Rivière's, and at other schools, this was a whole holiday. The girls were taken out in the morning to buy cakes and sweets, and to-day the *concièrge* might not ask what they brought home, for all their cakes and sweets might now pass the lodge. The afternoon was spent by many in the dormitories looking at and arranging the new frocks for the evening's wear, for most of the girls had new frocks for St. Catherine's Day.

In the evening they had a grand feast,—danced, played games, and acted charades in the recreation-room.

All enjoyed themselves to their hearts' content, and Hilda with the rest.

'St. Catherine !' Hilda repeated to herself that name again and again, both on this day and the first St. Catherine's Day that she had spent in France. This too reminded her of home.

Was not St. Catherine's Peak the highest mountain peak in the island of Grenada? and had not Nenus and Plunkett told her how they had climbed its summit?

Was this mountain, Hilda wondered, named after St. Catherine? If so, how she would like to tell old Charles the story of that saint, as it had been told to her !

St. Catherine, who was of royal birth, was one of the most distinguished ladies of Alexandria in the fourth century. From a child she was noted for her great learning, and whilst still very young she became a Christian. During the persecution of the Christians under the Emperor Maximianus II. she silenced, with her arguments in favour of Christianity, her pagan opposers, and the philosophers who listened to her became Christians also.

The emperor was very angry at this, and ordered them to be burnt. St. Catherine he had placed in a machine composed of four wheels, joined together and armed with sharp spikes, so that she should be torn to pieces as these wheels turned round. St. Catherine was saved from this horrible death by a miracle. A lightning flash broke the cord by which she was bound, shattered the engine, and killed her executioners and many of the bystanders. The wicked emperor then had her removed outside the city, where she was scourged and beheaded. The sign of her martyrdom is still called a Catherine wheel, and a firework resembling the instrument by which she was to have been put to death for her faith we know also bears her name.

This saint is honoured as the patroness of learning and theology, of colleges and education, and therefore it is that on the day set apart to commemorate her martyrdom these grand rejoicings take place at schools in France.

Time passed, and it was mid-winter. Hilda had now grown very fond indeed of Clochette d'Aubignier; and this was no wonder, for she was very kind to her. Clochette would help Hilda with her French lessons when she found them difficult, and she would find out and then tell her when it was safe to produce her doll; for, strange to say, there were girls still who delighted unmercifully in teasing Hilda about Cleopatra, and Mathilde had several times been heard to say that she meant to pay Hilda out for stopping her a holiday, forgetting that her own naughtiness had really stopped it; but as so long a time had passed, and the paying out was still deferred, Hilda began to hope that it would never come. But in this she was to be disappointed.

Mathilde was one of those vindictive, spiteful children, who are, I hope and believe, very seldom to be met with, who, having once felt that she owed a grudge, would never rest until she had paid it, and paid it too with interest.

The weather was cold, and snow was rather thick upon the ground. Still during recreation-time, if fine enough, the girls went out into the grounds as usual.

Hilda had learnt to skip very well, and was one day skipping with Clochette, most of the other girls being similarly engaged. The last time she had played with her doll she had forgotten to lock her little box, within which she had left the key. She had then put on Cleo a very favourite frock, and had made a bundle of her necklace, and a good many of her other things, with which she meant to play the next time



‘MATHILDE REACHED THE LADDER.’

that she and Dolly had the time and chance. The bundle was with the doll in the box.

Mathilde, who was told by a girl sleeping in the same dormitory with Hilda that the key had been left in the little box, waited for an opportunity to steal unnoticed to the dormitory. The opportunity came when the girls were in the garden to-day. Mathilde knew that if she were once found out she would be most severely punished for going into a dormitory not her own, and at the wrong time ; but to be revenged on Hilda she would risk more than this. She went very softly into the room ; she opened the cupboard, where her friend and another of poor Hilda's enemies, called Elise, had also told her that the doll was in the unlocked box, opened this, and quickly taking out from it the doll and bundle, she carried them into the garden ; she then walked stealthily along by the side of the high wall until she came to a spot where she had noticed that the gardener had left a ladder. This was a splendid help for her, and looking round very carefully all the way she went to see that no one watched her, Mathilde reached the ladder, which she mounted step by step.

At last she could see over the high school-wall, over which she then threw, first the bundle, and then the doll ; but her dismay was great when, at that moment, she saw a gendarme or policeman pass just below. All guilty people are afraid, and Mathilde was very much frightened now. She knew all along that what she was doing was very wrong, but until this moment she had not realized how very, very naughty it was.

'What are you doing there, Mademoiselle?' he asked in French. 'You will tumble ; get off that ladder,' and as he spoke he put up an arm to motion her back ; 'I will throw you up your doll.'

‘Thank you,’ said Mathilde ; ‘I let it drop.’

One fault generally brings another in its train. Now she thought she had better tell a falsehood to screen herself. Then she added, ‘I cannot tumble, as I am on a ladder, and am holding tight.’

The policeman turned to pick up the doll and bundle, but as he did so a large dog, whom he had not noticed before, and who had hold of the bundle, flew at him, and would neither allow him to touch that nor the doll.



Turc was walking along outside the high school-wall when the bundle fell, and recognising by the scent that it and the doll belonged to Hilda, and looking with distrust upon the gendarme, he took possession of, and would not allow the policeman to approach near to them. Hilda had endeared herself in many little ways to Turc ; many a piece of something that she knew he liked had the little girl carried to him,

many a caress had she given Turc, and her love would not go unrequited ; the dog would pay back love for love, good service for good service, of this we may be sure. Mathilde looked very frightened. The policeman told her to get down, and then he would go round to the gate and ask the *concièrge* to send and get the doll for her.

He had not to tell her to get down a second time, for, hearing the sound of voices in the garden, she quickly scrambled off the ladder, only a short distance from which she walked before she met some of her school-fellows skipping towards her.

What the policeman would do she could not guess, but she was very much afraid that it would be something to lead to what she had done being found out. If he went to the *concièrge*, she would be sure to send to have the doll picked up ; and then Hilda would not lose it after all, and she would be suspected of having thrown it away before anybody else, as governesses as well as girls knew that she had threatened Hilda. She knew that if a stranger even passed along that way now who would be likely to carry the doll or bundle away, Turc would not let them be touched.

It would never do for Mathilde to go round to the lodge to see if the policeman had gone there, for it would look suspicious for her to be seen loitering about the lodge, and would give the policeman an opportunity, too, of pointing her out to the *concièrge*, with whom she was no favourite.

There was nothing now to be done but to let things take their chance. She should have weighed some of these after-consequences before.

The dressing-bell for dinner rang, and the children went to their dormitories in answer to its summons, Mathilde with the rest.

Hilda, then remembering that she had left the key in her little box, peeped into the cupboard to take it out; but what was her dismay when she then found the box open, and the doll and bundle gone from out of it!

She ran here and there, asking the girls if they knew anything about this, but all answered 'No.'

She rushed outside the dormitory, and there she met a little girl called Paulette, who had run to tell her that she had seen her doll lying upon the ground in the street on the opposite side of the school-wall. She was skipping along the garden, she said, and heard Turc bark on the opposite side. From curiosity she had climbed the ladder, and had looked over, when she had seen the doll and a bundle on the ground, and Turc barking beside them, evidently because he could not drag them home. Hilda asked exactly where the ladder stood, and then she knew that her doll could not be lying far from the pump and second lamp-post that they passed on their way to church; and without waiting one moment to consider what she had better do, she rushed out into the garden, then to the lodge, and through the gate into the road unperceived, for the *concièrge* was at that moment standing with her back to Hilda, talking to some one whom she had just admitted, having left the gate a little open.

Meanwhile the policeman had not called at the lodge. Hearing an alarm of fire, he went off quickly in quite another direction, troubling himself very little about the doll, for, he said to himself, it was the young lady's fault that her doll had fallen, as she should not have climbed the ladder; and if she cared very much about it, she could easily go herself to ask the *concièrge* to send for it. No doubt it was in order to do this that she had descended the ladder so quickly.



CHAPTER XIII.

OUTSIDE THE GATES.

IN a moment Hilda had turned the corner, and was running very quickly towards the spot where she believed her doll to be. Tears were rolling down her cheeks as she hurried on. She had guarded Cleopatra so very carefully of late, and now at last she was thrown away. Hilda had only realized that her doll was on the other side of the school-wall, she had not taken in that Turc was with her; therefore she kept on wondering whatever she should do if she found her stolen when she got there.

Hilda took the precaution to cross the road, for fear lest any governess should be out and, returning this way, should meet her. The child soon passed a post office, a small tobacconist's shop, outside which stood a boy, about a year or two older than herself, stamping a letter, and she could not help seeing that the stamp was just the same colour as were the stamps that were used to stamp her letters to go to Grenada. She therefore looked at it as she passed.

The young gentleman was very much surprised to see a young lady out alone, without a hat or jacket on, for he knew

that girls in France were never allowed to walk about alone ; and still more astonished was he to notice her tear-stained face, and the pace at which she was running. He stopped her, saying, 'Are you running after somebody, because if so, I'll go for you, as I might be able to run faster?'

'They've thrown my doll,' she answered, hardly able to speak for crying, 'over the school-wall, and if I wait one moment I might be too late to get it,' and she ran on, the boy, now interested in her story, running beside her to help her to find it. The little boy was English, but both children till now had spoken French.

'Hark !' she then exclaimed, speaking to herself ; 'why that's Turc's bark ; perhaps, oh ! perhaps a thief is stealing Cleopatra, and he's trying to keep him off.'

'Are you English?' the boy then asked. 'So am I,' he added quickly, not requiring an answer to his question ; but then he could not help smiling, because it seemed to him so absurd to think that a thief would want to steal a doll. He did not understand how very precious a doll could seem in the eyes of a little girl, who loved and valued it.

They had reached the spot, and, oh ! there were both the doll and bundle, and Turc was guarding them for Hilda ; and he had most likely only barked to show her where to come, for no thief was near.

In a moment the treasures were in Hilda's arms. Turc made no resistance now. Her companion did not smile again ; he was looking very seriously at the doll.

'You haven't posted your letter,' Hilda then said, glancing at the letter he still carried in his hand. 'Did you forget it?'

'I did for the moment,' he answered, 'but it will do all right now, though it's for my father, as the mail does not go for

several days to Trinidad ; but as I had written it, my tutor said that I could come and post it. But where did your doll come from? I've never seen one like that in France.'

'No ; that came from Grenada,' said Hilda, speaking eagerly. 'Did you say that your father was in Trinidad?'

'Yes.'

'And mine's in Grenada ; and those are near together, and they are both West India islands. Oh, how funny ! But isn't it nice?'

The boy then talked again of the doll. He said he had never seen such a strange one, but it reminded him very much of a nurse he used to have in Trinidad, as she dressed something like that.

Hilda was delighted. She thought it was so kind of this boy to like to talk about her doll, especially when girls had been so unkind. 'And she's like my nurse there too,' she said ; 'and the girls at school tease my doll, and throw her away like that ; isn't it cruel of them?'

'What's your name?' asked the other child suddenly.

'Hilda Montgomery,' she answered ; 'and what is yours?'

'Basil Harcourt.'

'What a pretty name !'

'I like yours too, very much,' said the boy ; 'and what's your dog called? He seems a splendid fellow.'

'He's not mine, he belongs to the *concièrge* at school ; but I love him very much,' Hilda added, as she stopped to pet Turc, and to thank him again for what he had done. She had already thanked him once very gratefully.

'I hope you will get in all right,' Basil said, as he left Hilda at her school gates, and ran off to go back the nearest way to his tutor's house.

Hilda heard the dinner-bell ring as she reached the gates. What should she do? she wondered; she would be so late for dinner. And when she looked up and saw now that the gates were quite fastened, she wondered how she would get in. She must ring, of course; but then what would the *concièrge* say? what Madame? for most likely the *concièrge* would not let her pass the lodge without telling Madame that she had been out, and this was an unpardonable infringement of the school rules, she knew. Her friend Turc was beside her, but he could not help her now. She thought she must risk all, and ring, for every moment was of importance, every moment made it later for her to go in to dinner.

She had her doll and its dear bundle; this was such a comfort to her, that she felt she could bear much now; but still she could not summon up courage to ring. Then Turc settled the matter for her by barking for his mistress to come and let her in. He could get through the gates, but it would not satisfy him to do that, and leave Hilda without. The *concièrge*, hearing her dog bark, ran out of the lodge to look for him, for she, having missed him for some time, had wondered what had become of him.

Her astonishment knew no bounds when she saw one of the young ladies outside the gate with him, without a hat on, and at dinner-time; and she could not imagine how she had got out. She opened the gate, led Hilda through, then locked it again, and took Hilda into the lodge, the door of which she also closed. She then asked the child how she had dared to go outside the gates, and how she had managed to slip through. Hilda told as much as the *concièrge* then cared to hear as quickly as she could, and when the good woman saw the poor little, tear-stained, sorrowful face, up at which

her own dog Turc was still gazing, she could only feel pity ; but still she must do her duty, and leading the child by the hand, she took her into school, and then sent into the dining-room to ask to speak to the head governess. Very fortunately for Hilda, Madame Rivière herself was dining out this evening.

Mademoiselle L'Herbier came in answer to the *concièrge's* summons, and was much surprised to see Hilda with her, but still more so to hear what the *concièrge* had to say. Hilda was asked no questions then. Her doll and its bundle were taken from her, and she was told first to make herself a little tidy for dinner, and then to go at once into the dining-room. She had already been missed, but no one could or would say where she was. Little Paulette knew, but never answered when at dinner the question was put, 'Did any one know where Hilda Montgomery was?' Directly after dinner, during recreation-time, Hilda had to prepare her lessons for the following day, and then to go straight to bed.

She felt very much ashamed to walk in to dinner so late, and as she went in most of the girls looked at her, and many made remarks. Hilda was very sad and angry, as her face showed ; then she was anxious too, for she feared that a very heavy punishment was in store for her ; but there was one bright spot, Cleopatra was safe, thanks to dear Turc, as Hilda thought. Clochette and little Dolly Scott had been wondering very much what had become of their friend, and were very uneasy about her when the time slipped on and she did not come back to dress for dinner, but they never for one moment imagined it possible that she could have run out of doors. This would have seemed to them quite an impossibility.



CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER RECREATION.

THE next morning Hilda went to breakfast as usual, and to lessons from eight o'clock until a quarter to twelve. All that time she had been wondering when her summons to the head governess or even to Madame, would come; for if her misdeed had been reported to her, no doubt she herself would send for her; but recreation-time came, and still there was no summons for Hilda. She went out into the garden with the rest of the girls. It was a bright, cold winter's day, but they wore no cloaks or hats; their aprons were warm, and as they only went out of doors to play on bright days, they did not accustom themselves to wear extra out-of-door clothing, but kept themselves warm by running and skipping. Hilda's friend Clochette walked up to her. The English child looked very sad and anxious to-day, and most of her companions were very sorry for her. Many of the French girls at Madame Rivière's were very warm-hearted and kind to one another when in trouble; but some of them had this peculiarity, the same girls who were most sympathizing one day, would, when the cause of sorrow was removed, be unkind and pitiful towards those whom they had before befriended. But Clochette d'Aubignier was kind without ever being

spiteful, and during the last six months had added greatly to Hilda's happiness by her unvarying friendship ; and as she was two years older than Hilda, and two forms higher, Hilda valued her friendship very much.

'What *is* all this, Hilda?' she asked, directly they had stepped out into the garden. 'Is it really true that you went outside the gates alone yesterday? It seems almost impossible that you could have done such a thing.'

Several other girls walked towards Hilda, as though they wished to put a similar question. Anxious little Dolly went towards her on the other side. Mathilde, who had rather an awe and fear of Clochette, went as near her as she could, in order, if possible, to overhear what Hilda was saying to her friend.

Paulette had her back towards Hilda, talking to another group of girls, and was trying to change the subject of conversation—Hilda's absence yesterday at the beginning of dinner.

'If it is true,' Clochette went on, 'I cannot think what punishment you will have, and I only hope that Madamie will hear nothing about it.'

'What do you think my punishment will be?' asked Hilda, speaking so softly that none of the other girls could hear ; 'because it is quite true. I went to fetch Cleopatra, who was actually lying on the path, the other side of the wall, close to the pump!'

'As far as that?' asked Clochette.

'Yes, it was just beyond the pump, near to the second lamp-post.'

'Well, if I were you,' whispered Clochette, as she moved nearer to Hilda, 'I would not say how far I had been, and if asked I should put it at half that distance. No one would know unless you told them ; the *concièrge* couldn't say how far you went, and the gardener came back to move his ladder when we were at dinner.'

'But I could not do that ; I could not say what was

untrue,' said Hilda, not only shocked, but dreadfully grieved and disappointed that her friend Clochette, whom she had believed to be so very good, could advise her to tell a falsehood.

'Oh, Clochette,' Hilda repeated, 'I must say just the right place; it would be so dreadful not to do that!'

At this moment a call was given to summon the whole school into the recreation-room. This was the largest room in the school.

The head governess, not Madame, was there. Hilda was very glad of that when she was beckoned to come apart from the other girls, and say how far she had gone yesterday along the path outside, and was asked how she could dare to go. Hilda mentioned the exact spot whither she had run, and said that she had gone to fetch her doll, who was on the other side of the wall.

When asked how she knew that her doll was there, she refused to answer, because she thought that Paulette might get into trouble for going up the ladder and looking over the wall, if it were known that she had done this.

A question was then put to the assembled school. Had any of the girls heard before dinner that Hilda's doll was on the other side of the wall? Paulette stepped forward and said what she had known and done in the matter.

Then all together, and when this failed to bring an answer, one by one the girls were asked if any of them knew how Hilda's doll and bundle had got to the other side of the wall. All said they knew nothing about it, and most of the girls looked innocent; but one, Mathilde d'Arcier, looked very much confused.

Several other questions were put to the girls, but when no light was by them thrown on the subject, all but Mathilde were dismissed.

She had been heard by the governesses themselves to



“‘I COULD NOT SAY WHAT WAS UNTRUE.’”



threaten Hilda, and now, though she declared her innocence with the rest, the expression of her face almost declared her guilt.

The servants were then questioned, and one of them said that she had seen Mademoiselle D'Arcier walk along the garden yesterday afternoon carrying a doll and small bundle. This stamped her guilt, and when Mathilde found that it was of no use trying to appear innocent any longer, she owned that from spite she had fetched Hilda's doll out of her dormitory cupboard, where it was always known to be kept, had climbed the ladder, and thrown the doll and bundle over the wall. She was most severely reprimanded and punished.

Mathilde, on being found guilty of this one fault, was guilty of very many grave offences.

She had, first of all, gone into a dormitory that was not her own, at a time when she had no business to go into a dormitory at all. She had taken Hilda's things from Hilda's box, and had maliciously thrown them away. Then she had told grave falsehoods to hide her other misdeeds.

Mademoiselle L'Herbier fixed upon her punishment. Twice she was to go to bed, twice to write out lines in recreation-time, one Thursday afternoon and one from Saturday to Monday she was to remain at school instead of going out.

And then Mademoiselle sent for Hilda again. She must be punished too.

Nothing could excuse her running out of doors alone when she knew how very particular the governesses were on this point. Of this Hilda was quite aware, but when she first heard what had happened to her doll, she cared for neither rules nor regulations.

Although angry with Hilda, Mademoiselle L'Herbier was also sorry for the child; and it was never known whether or

not her conduct was reported to Madame, for Madame never sent to reprimand her for it.

She was very angry indeed with Mathilde, as we can well imagine.

Hilda very penitently begged forgiveness for her naughtiness in going out, and readily promised never to do anything of the sort again.

Her punishment was twice to write out lines during recreation, to go once to bed, and not to have her doll and its bundle restored to her for a week.

At first she felt very angry indeed with Mathilde, but when she found that she was more or less disgraced throughout the school, and that a very heavy punishment had fallen upon her, Hilda began to be sorry that she had felt so very angry towards her, and to want to be friends with her. What Mathilde had done to Hilda was very, very unkind, only Hilda herself knew how unkind; but now that Mathilde was so much punished, Hilda began to make excuses to herself for her. Perhaps she only meant to hide the doll and bundle on the wall for a little time, and they had fallen over, she once thought; and she may be very, very sorry now, Hilda went on thinking; 'and I've got Cleo back, and shall soon be able to play with her again, and much better than I could before even, for all the girls have promised not to tease her any more, and to make some new clothes for her on Thursday afternoons.'

Hilda longed very eagerly for the week of punishment to be over, that Cleopatra might be restored to her, who seemed more precious to her than ever for having been lost and found again.

Two other people came in also for their share of blame,—the gardener for leaving his ladder against the wall when he had finished with it, and the *concièrge* for not being better on the look-out when Hilda slipped through the gate.



CHAPTER XV.

BASIL.

JOYFUL news had come for Hilda from Grenada. In a very few weeks hence her father was to pay a visit to England and France, and then she would see him again. It was worth while even to have left Grenada and come to school to have the happiness of looking forward to his visit.

‘And, Clochette,’ she said to her friend, after telling her the contents of her letter, ‘when I go home on Thursdays or Saturdays,—for my father will stay a little time in Passy, and then, of course, I shall have a home here too,—you must come home with me sometimes, because I have been with you so often, and enjoyed myself so much; and when you go without me you bring me back such pretty presents every now and then, and sweets. But, Clochette dear, I wanted to ask you, please, not to bring me in any more sweets, as the *concièrge* says we mustn’t have them brought in; and, Clochette,’ Hilda continued in a very low voice, after hesitating for a moment, ‘you won’t tell any more stories, will you, because it does not seem as if you could tell them, you are so good?’

Hilda loved Clochette more and more, and it was such a disappointment to her to find her less perfect than she had imagined her to be.

Clochette laughed. 'Do you think a few little ones hurt so much?' she asked.

The expression of Hilda's face showed plainer than her words even that there were no such things as little falsehoods.

Hilda was much happier now than she had been the first year that she was at school, and had several very good friends ; but some girls certainly do love to tease unmercifully, and Cleopatra was still every now and then held up to ridicule.

If Hilda had not minded the ridicule, this would have stopped, but it still made her very angry.

Mathilde had never forgiven her for a great wrong that she blindly imagined Hilda had done her, and although the latter made several attempts to be friendly with her, Mathilde would not accept her friendship at all.

When the long-looked-for day arrived, Hilda was summoned into the drawing-room to see a gentleman, and before she went she knew that the gentleman must be her father. It was Wednesday ; he had arrived over night, and as he had come from so great a distance, Hilda was allowed at once to see him, but not to go home with him until the following day.

Hilda *was* glad to be clasped in his arms once more, and, oh, so glad to think of going home with him to-morrow ! Home ! She had learnt to know the meaning of that word now, even better than she knew it in Grenada. She had spent many very happy afternoons at the kind clergyman's, and these were always very happy now, as all the girls had promised faithfully never to trouble Cleo in her absence. She had also been very happy when she had gone out with Clochette and some of her other school-fellows. Still that was not going home ; but when her father came to France and took her out with him, *that* would be going there.

Hilda had so much to ask and hear and say that Wednesday afternoon, that many would have thought she was leaving

nothing to talk about on the following day ; but she told Dolly, after her father had gone again, that she could talk for a whole year without stopping, and still not tell her father all she had to tell him, or ask him half the questions she wanted him to answer about her mother, and Dora, and Nana, and old Charles, and Nenus, and Plunkett, and everybody.

How much she had to say can perhaps only be imagined by children who have been parted from their parents for about two years.

It was a great disappointment to the child that her mother had not been able to come to Europe also ; but Mrs. Montgomery's mother, who had also gone out to Grenada, was now very ill, her daughter feared dying, and therefore she remained to nurse her. As Mrs. Montgomery did not go to France, Nana and Dora had to remain behind also ; and Mr. Montgomery, not being able to defer his visit, made it alone. His wife was terribly disappointed, but she sacrificed pleasure to the call of duty, and began to look forward to a visit to her child at a future time.

Hilda was too happy to murmur, and looked forward also.

' You darling, darling father ! ' she said, as she sat for a few minutes upon his knee, in his little private sitting-room at a hotel in Passy, on Thursday afternoon ; ' I am so glad to see you that I can't say how glad. I've told everybody that I know that you were coming, and everybody wants to see you ; and I told Turc too, and he wagged his tail. I do so love Turc, father ; he's a dog, you know, and I must take him in a biscuit to-day, for I nearly always take him something when I come out. Do you know, when I had nobody to talk to much at school, and the girls didn't care for me at all, and I felt all alone, I think Turc guessed that I was a new, strange girl, and wanted comforting, for when I was crying all by myself, he used to come and put his dear old head on to my lap, and lick my hand. Wasn't it good of him, father ? He

often made me not feel lonely, and he found my doll once, and saved it from being stolen; but I can't tell you about that, because I am trying to forget it now. I think I love Turc as much as I love Jack.'

Many kind people had again sent Hilda presents from Grenada; Mother, Nana—no one seemed to have forgotten her once more. Nana's present was a new set of everything for Cleo, and Nenus' another necklace, the beads of which he had gathered, pierced, and strung himself.

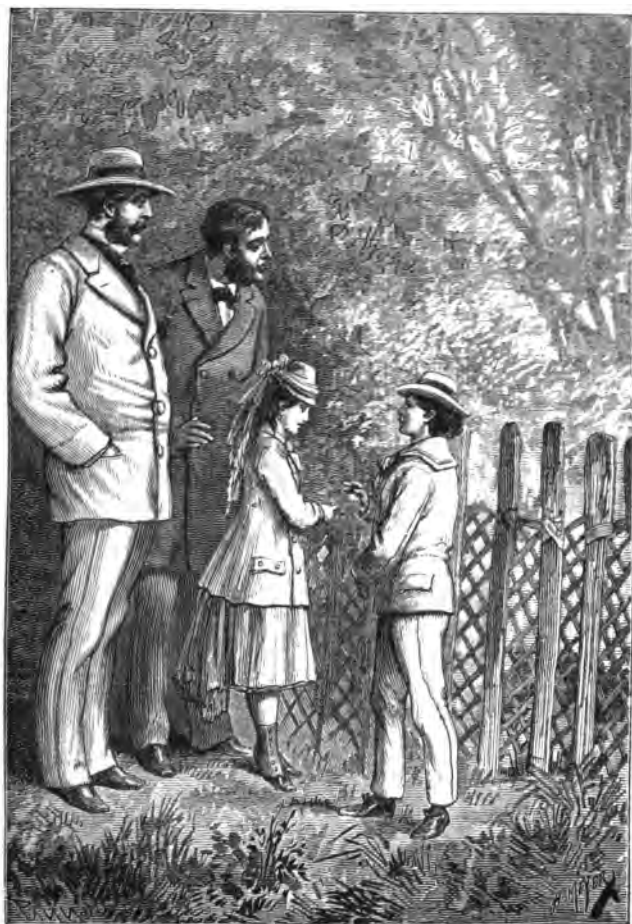
Hilda and her father then went for a long walk together in the Bois de Boulogne. She had only once been to the Zoological Gardens, and as she was very anxious to go here again, her father consented to take her there for a short time this afternoon. A brisk three-quarters of an hour's walk across the Bois brought them to the spot. Before going in, they met a gentleman who looked very pleased to see Mr. Montgomery again. He and his wife had been his fellow-passengers during most of their voyage from the West Indies, and the gentlemen having heard from one another that each had a child being educated in Passy, a common interest seemed to strengthen their acquaintance.

It was a lovely July day, and everything spoke of summer. Mr. Montgomery's friend had taken off his hat for the wind to fan his temples, and whilst the other was asking him how his little son was, the latter, who had remained behind to enjoy some rides on the roundabout, quite near to the Porte de Maillot, at which gate he and his father had come into the Bois, now joined them.

In a moment he took off his hat, and then held out his hand to Hilda. She gave him hers, and both children looked glad though surprised to meet again.

'Do you know one another?' their fathers asked.

Neither answered. Basil was afraid to tell where and how he had met Hilda, because he knew that she ought not to



'BOTH CHILDREN LOOKED GLAD THOUGH SURPRISED TO MEET AGAIN.'

have been out by herself when he saw her ; and Hilda did not know how to explain the whole circumstance quickly. Besides this, she was trying hard to forget all about that day, Mr. Stacey having told her that she must forgive and try to forget every unkindness that had been shown to her.

‘We met one day,’ Basil answered ; ‘didn’t we ? But that was some time ago. I’m very glad to see you again now, Hilda,’ he continued, for he had not forgotten the name of the little girl who was in such dreadful distress when he saw her, nor her strange doll, that had reminded him of his nurse when he was a little boy in Trinidad. He had often wondered what sort of punishment she had had for being out alone.

‘When did you meet ?’ Mr. Montgomery asked.

‘I’ll tell you, if you like, when we go back, father,’ Hilda said ; ‘I’d rather not now.’

Her father was satisfied.

As all were bound for the Zoological Gardens they now went thither together. The band was playing, but Hilda and Basil both cared much more for the animals than for the music. After remaining here a little while, Mr. Harcourt invited Mr. Montgomery and Hilda to take coffee with him and Basil at the Cascade Café, which invitation Mr. Montgomery accepted for them.

This restaurant was close to the Cascade, a beautiful fall of water over some rocks.

They called a fly or *fiacre*, which took them quite near to the Cascade in about a quarter of an hour.

The party then sat under the trees to drink their coffee, after which Hilda and Basil had some swings. There were many swings in the Bois de Boulogne.

But although Hilda had leave to remain away from school later than usual to-day, she knew that she must get back soon after dinner ; therefore, her father saying that they must be home to that meal in good time, they started for home.

Mr. Harcourt and Basil walked a little way with them, Hilda and Basil playing at hide-and-seek in the pretty woods of the Bois as they went along. Mr. Montgomery and Hilda then drove the rest of the way home, whilst Mr. Harcourt and Basil walked out of the Bois, through the Porte de Maillot, from whence they took the train to Paris.

Hilda had one grievance to-day, and she had often had this grievance before. The horses that drew the flies were many of them so thin, so wretched-looking, and so over-driven, that to watch them on the roads often quite spoilt Hilda's pleasure. The horse that drew their *fiacre* was in better condition than many of the others.

She pointed out several of these poor horses to her father, but he had already noticed them himself.

Children realize how precious their homes are, how very, very dear their parents, when they have left and been separated from them for a season. Hilda realized all this to the full that evening when she returned to school.





CHAPTER XVI.

SATURDAY TO MONDAY.

THE following Saturday to Monday was the happiest Saturday to Monday that Hilda had spent since she went to school. Her father fetched her early on the Saturday afternoon, and did not take her back until nine o'clock on Monday morning. On their way home from school on Saturday, they called upon Mr. and Mrs. Stacey, when Mr. Montgomery thanked them very much for their great kindness towards his child since she had been at school.

It was the same loving little Hilda who sat that evening on her father's knee, with her arms thrown round his neck, that had sat there in Grenada two years before, and yet there was, he felt sure, a further difference in the child than what two years added to her age alone could make. What was it?

She had been full of love and thoughtfulness before, and this she seemed still to be, but there was a difference in her love now. In Grenada she was loving, thoughtful even, if this were possible, almost at random; then no trials had come into her little life, no temptations had there seemed to assail her, and she ever acted upon impulse in those joyous days—impulse, though, happily leading her in a right direc-

tion ; but if this life had lasted, if no discipline had found its way into it, Hilda's character, sweet and loving though it was, must have been spoilt.

'If ye love those that love you, what reward have you?' Hilda was now learning to love those who did not love her, as well as those who did ; and knowing better and better her own faults, she recognised less and less those of others.

She had done of late, was doing still, hard battle with herself, and the warfare was purifying her little character.

It is very helpful, very encouraging to be loved ; and love and kindness are doubtless the best monitors, the best teachers, the best guides, the best rulers most of us can have ; but too much love, so often undeserved, may also do us harm.

'When did you see Basil before, Hilda?' asked her father, as they sat and talked together.

The child considered.

'That's about what I want to forget,' she then said, looking very thoughtful.

'Tell your father first, Hilda ; he would like to know this before you forget it.'

She hid her face in her hands, and said, 'It's a dreadful thing, father.'

Mr. Montgomery looked puzzled.

'The whole thing,' she went on, 'what happened to Cleopatra, and what I said and thought about it all for ever so long.'

'But what has that to do with Basil?'

'That's how I met him ; if that hadn't happened, I don't suppose I should have.'

'Tell it me all now, Hilda. Have you told Mademoiselle L'Herbier?'

'Not that I met Basil ; I always forgot to tell her that, when I talked to her ; she knew all the rest.'

'And now I want to hear it.'

‘Well, father,’ she began, ‘you know I’ve been very, very wicked since I came to France. Old Grandfather and Nenus used to say that I loved everybody, and I did in Grenada, because I couldn’t help it ; but I haven’t since I came to school, because some of the girls, especially one, teased Cleopatra, and then I hated them. They called her all sorts of names, one was “an old black thing ;” and one day a girl threw her over the wall, and I thought she would be lost, and I ran out and up the road to fetch her. I met Basil when I was going, and he came with me to find her ; that’s how we knew one another ; and when we saw Cleopatra, Turc was with her. No one would have known she was there, except the girl who let her fall over, unless Turc had barked.’

‘It was a very good thing that the dog did this for you, Hilda ; but it was very naughty indeed of you to run out from school like that.’

‘I know it was, father, but I was in such a hurry then.’

‘And you should certainly not have’—

‘Hated, father ! Oh, I know that too, but I can’t, I couldn’t tell you the dreadfully wicked thoughts I’ve had sometimes ! I’ve felt so angry that I haven’t known what to do.’

‘I am very sorry to hear this, Hilda,’ answered her father ; ‘your mother and I never thought that this would be a temptation to our little girl when we sent her away from us to school, we thought her so very loving ; but this teaches us to be on our guard against even unlikely enemies to our souls, does it not ? and as we are not nearly strong enough to stand alone, what must we always do ?’

‘Pray, father ; and sometimes I was too angry to pray at all ; but I always do so now, and I am trying hard to forget about it all, because Mr. Stacey said once that we must try to forgive and forget all unkindnesses that have been shown to us. And I was very disagreeable too, wasn’t I, because I wouldn’t ever lend my doll ? Clochette said that she thought

if I had lent Cleopatra, they wouldn't really have hurt her ; and if I had not minded their teasing so much, they would soon have left it off.'

'But, father, wasn't it a very good thing that Cleopatra wasn't lost?' she went on. 'I don't think I could possibly have forgotten if she had been, because I should have been so unhappy ; and do you know, Turc sometimes helps to teach me how to forgive, because he is very forgiving himself in many ways ?

'When I was angry sometimes about Cleopatra I felt angry with everybody, even with him, and on some of those days when he came near to me I drove him away, and would not give him anything nice, even if I had it ; and that was just before he saved my doll, so he would not leave off loving me, would he ? and he often asked me to be friends again. I think I must have been so horrid not to be ; but afterwards, of course, I always was. And Clochette teaches me lessons too, for she never quarrels with the girls whatever they say to her, and she never answered me when I said all sorts of disagreeable things to her.'

'You were very naughty, Hilda.'

'And old Grandfather and Nenus thought I was so good !' This seemed to weigh upon Hilda's mind. It seemed almost as though she had practised a deception towards them. Her father spoke to her for some time longer, telling her that it was worse in a warm-hearted child like herself to fall as she had, than in one less affectionate by nature.

'But,' he said, 'I know that because you are so naturally affectionate you also feel slights and small unkindnesses very much indeed ; yet you must learn to bear them bravely, and in the end they are much better for you than the spoiling you had in Grenada. What did you do, my pet, to deserve all the love that was there bestowed upon you ?'

The child thought.

'Nothing, father, not one single thing,' she answered; 'but I deserved all that I had at school, didn't I, when I could be cross and ill-tempered even to old Turc, who was always ready to do me good, and to little Dolly Scott too, my little English friend, whom I want you to invite, with Clochette, if you will, to come home with me next Thursday. She has been such a dear little friend to me! One day when I was walking along the garden all alone, feeling too cross to speak to anybody, Dolly came and took hold of my hand, and walked along with me, without saying one word, and that made my angry feelings go away. Wasn't it kind of Dolly, father?'

'Very kind,' said Mr. Montgomery, as he kissed his little Hilda, and wiped tears from her eyes that had gathered there.

Then he felt very glad that he had sent his child to school when he did.

She had found her level, and was all the better for the finding. No flattery of the natives in Grenada would have persuaded Hilda now that she was good. She had learnt her own shortcomings, and where much had been shallow before, there was now a depth of character in the child.

'Are you happy at school?' asked her father.

'Very, now,' was the quick reply; 'because I like the lessons, and I have a great many friends, and sometimes I go out with them; and if I don't, on Thursday afternoons the girls and I make clothes for our dolls, and we play games. Yes, I am very happy now; but I shall be very glad when you and mother come to England, for I do so want to see dear mother and Nana and Dora again. How soon do you think it will be?'

'In about twenty to twenty-four months.'

'Oh, I shall be glad when that time comes! I don't suppose I shall know Dora at all when I see her,' said Hilda.

'Do you think I shall?'



CHAPTER XVII.

HOLIDAYS.

AS Mr. Montgomery had business to transact in London, and the school year was just ending in Passy, and Hilda's summer holidays were just beginning, her father took her with him to England there to spend them. This was a great treat for the child, as she had not been to England before; and whenever her father could spare the time from his business, he took her to see some sight or gave her some pleasure or another. She found great delight in shopping with her father, and helping him to choose gifts for the dear ones in Grenada. People abroad think so much of presents from England.

And Hilda also had some presents to buy in London to take back to school,—one for Mademoiselle L'Herbier, who had been so very kind to her; one for Clochette, another for Dolly Scott, and one for Mathilde. Yes, Hilda thought about this for a long time before she made up her mind, but then it was quite made up, and she bought a present for Mathilde, to show her that she was nearly forgetting and had quite forgiven. Clochette and Dolly had spent the promised afternoon with Hilda before she came away, and had enjoyed
lives very much.

The child determined to send Dora a doll's perambulator from England, and a doll from Paris. She liked the French dolls better than the English. She wanted to send Dora all the largest toys that she could find, but father reminded her that these toys would have to be packed. Her black friends were again remembered.

The little box had come with her to England, and when her father had to go to places where he could not take her, Cleopatra kept her company. But then her father's stay in Europe, and her holidays, drew towards an end, so father and daughter had their last, long talk together, Hilda had to be taken back to school in Passy, and he had to start on his homeward journey to Grenada.

Partings are always sad. Unlike other things, I think the more we have of these the less we grow accustomed to them, and of course Hilda felt again very much this parting with her father. We should not love her if she had not done so.

When he was gone, and she settled down again to school life, she still had her trials, temptations, and difficulties to encounter, but she faced, and tried to overcome, them very manfully. One girl would sometimes provoke her to anger; another, not to jealousy (there was no jealousy in Hilda's disposition), but to slight feelings of mortification and pride. In a large school, where there are about one hundred and fifty pupils, one disposition must often jar very much upon another; but Hilda, with many of her companions also, learnt to bear and forbear, and neither to wish nor to expect to be thought of first.

In Grenada she had often been called unselfish. She now knew that the word had been misapplied to her, for to be unselfish we must to a very large extent *forget* self, and this she had not done; we must be ready to give up all that on which we set value for the good of others; our own interests must be sunk in those of another.

Mathilde had often tried to quarrel with Hilda since that eventful day, but Hilda tried, in return, very hard to keep her temper when she said hard, disagreeable, provoking things to her, so the quarrel did not often come off. She had at first refused to accept the little present that Hilda had brought her from England, but she had done so afterwards; and Mathilde, whose every better instinct and principle had been sacrificed to a bitter, disagreeable spirit of revenge, was learning by degrees to see herself and her faults as others could not fail to see them, and then really to grow ashamed of them.

Without knowing that they did so, the girls at Madame Rivière's school in Passy exercised much influence upon one another, and Hilda's forgiving spirit towards Mathilde was having a very good effect, and causing her less and less to try to quarrel with her. Clochette also very seldom now spoke anything but quite the truth.

The next two years seemed to pass very quickly, and then both Hilda's parents came to visit her together; but as Mr. Montgomery had much business to transact, that would take him about a great deal, and he could only spare four or five months in all to be away, he decided not to bring Dora or Nana with them.

He was able to come to this decision, because a great friend of his wife's, who lived on one of the highest mountains in Grenada, kindly offered to receive the child and her nurse whilst her parents were away; and he there placed them in a very pleasant home for the time.

Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt remained in Paris many months after Mr. Montgomery went back, and his daughter, who had just left school, came also from England to stay with them.

Hilda was very glad of this, as they were very kind to her, and often asked her to spend a holiday afternoon with them.

She and Basil had many a game together. He told his sister that he liked Hilda because she could play such sensible games with him. Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt were now back in Grenada (they remained away one year in all). Basil was in England with his tutor; and his sister, who stayed behind in Paris with an aunt, had, since her parents went back to the West Indies, married a French gentleman and settled in Paris.

Hilda now enjoyed her parents' visit as much as it was possible for her to enjoy anything, and once again she had very much to ask about dear Grenada and its inhabitants.

Poor old Grandfather Charles was dead. He had died of a severe attack of rheumatism six months ago. Hilda had wondered lately why she never received a message from him now, but her parents had kept back this news, that they knew would grieve her, till they could impart it to her themselves. She now heard that he died very happily and peacefully, often inquiring for her in his last illness. 'The Parson' came to see him whilst he was ill, and administered to him the Holy Communion. Just before he died he gave his master a little picture of the crucifixion, that Miss Hilda had once long ago, he said, cut out of one of her books for him, asking that this might be given back to her from him, and that she might be told that the picture had taught him, who could not read, to understand much better about it all.

'Dear little Miss Hilda!' he would say sometimes; 'I wonder if em still tink on poor ole Charl'. Him often tink on him, and lub him fe true, 'cause em larn off him so well what kindness an' good-care-for mean.'

Hilda was very sorry to think that the old man, of whom she had been so fond as a little child, had gone away; but she was very glad to hear of his happy death, and she valued very much the picture he had returned to her after possessing and taking care of it so long.

Mrs. Montgomery had many funny stories to tell of Dora. She was now seven years old, but her mother told Hilda of things that had happened when she was four. One of them amused Hilda very much.

‘She was standing one day,’ her mother said, ‘in a room all by herself opposite to a looking-glass, when I suddenly opened the door and went in. When I asked her what she was doing, she said, “I was just thinking that I rather like the look of me.”’

Hilda often said how much she would like to see her little sister again. It was now the end of her fourth school-year: the school-year at Madame Rivière’s ended in July, and Hilda had also first come to school in that month.

She had now gained five prizes in all: none the first year; one the second, for general English; two the third, for general English and geography; and the fourth year she carried off the conduct, besides one of the lesson prizes.

The rewards were beautiful large red books, on which her name was engraved.

Most of the time that her parents were in Europe Hilda had holidays, for in the summer at Madame Rivière’s these lasted for two months; and as Hilda had not seen her mother for so long, hers were prolonged till they went back. These holidays, she told them, quite made up for those that she had spent at school.

‘I should so like to see Grenada again,’ she said one evening to her mother. ‘I used to think that I loved it for the people in it,—for we had some nice friends, hadn’t we?’ Hilda was not talking of the natives now;—‘but I love Grenada for itself now, it is so pretty, isn’t it? and I think it is such a dear, brave little island.’

‘Have you not forgotten it, Hilda?’

‘No, I haven’t, really.’

Hilda had a very good memory.

‘And why do you call it a brave little island?’ asked her mother.

‘Because it has had such troubles, and goes on trying.’

‘What do you know of its troubles?’

‘A good deal, mother. Madame Rivière lent me a book to read about the West Indies, and this book told me that Grenada was discovered by Christopher Columbus in his third voyage, in 1498; that a horrible French governor of Martinique, called Du Parquet, came with 200 men to take possession of the island in 1650, and gave the fierce Caribs, who lived there, presents to make them like them, and then they killed them. I remember quite well hearing the name of “Leaper’s Hill” when I was in Grenada. That was where the poor Caribs jumped into the sea to get away from those horrid men. And then,’ Hilda went on, ‘St. George was burnt in 1771. I learnt all the dates,’ she continued, smiling, ‘because it was about Grenada. Then it was built up once more, and burnt again in 1775; and though it was not all burnt the next time, there was another fire in 1792, which burnt a great part of the town. I should think some one must have been very careless with a candle, shouldn’t you, mother?’

Hilda was still very childish in many ways.

‘Then some sugar-ants came and destroyed the sugar in 1770; mustn’t that have been a dreadful loss? And there was a hurricane in 1780; but this took the ants away, so it did good as well as harm, and I should think the planters were rather glad.’

Hilda now took a deep breath, and brought a little pocket-book out of her pocket.

‘I’ve forgotten the next date,’ she said, ‘and I put down in my pocket-book all the dates about Grenada in case I forgot them, because I wanted to remember all I could

about Grenada, as my home's there, and father's property, and everything.'

'There was an earthquake in 1766, and yellow fever killed ever so many people in 1794.'

Hilda then put her pocket-book away, because she remembered all the rest.

'Do you know to whom Grenada first belonged?' asked her mother.

'The French. Then we took it in 1762; it was settled on us in 1763, then the French retook it in 1779, and restored it to us in 1783, and now I should think we should always keep it,' said Hilda. 'But, mother, it was so strange to read about the port from which Nana and I started. It said it was a coal-depot and a station for British West India mail steamers. Oh, mother, I do so wish Nenus could hear all about this; when you go back will you please tell him?'

'All I can remember, Hilda; but you have told me so much.'

'I'm very glad I've remembered most of it. I took such a trouble to learn it, mother. I thought you and father would like me to know all about my own home.'

'So we do, my darling, and to remember and love your home.'





CHAPTER XVIII.

DORA.

DURING the next two years Hilda grew very much, and at fifteen she was tall for her age. She had been prepared for confirmation by Mr. Stacey, and confirmed six months ago in the English church. She was in one of the high forms at school. Once more she seemed to be a universal favourite. Even Mathilde seemed to have been quite won over by her very gentle conduct of late towards her.

Mademoiselle L'Herbier now often wrote letters to her old pupil about her child that pleased her very much.

Hilda was looking well, she said, Hilda was studying very hard, Hilda was very happy and good, and still a great romp in recreation-hours. Yes, though Hilda was fond of her lessons, she loved play as much as any girl in the school, and she was all the better for loving it so well.

She was very proud of having at last learnt to skip quite as cleverly even as Clochette.

As she was fifteen, Dora was eight, and Nana was now on her way to France with the latter, bringing her to school, as six years ago she had brought Hilda.

The doctor had decided that the child would not be strong unless she were sent to Europe soon.

Dear little Dora ! How Hilda longed to see her little sister again ! how she wondered what she could be like after all these years !

She could only half remember the funny little girl who had asked her if she were 'quite tooly' going to school, and now she was quite truly coming herself. The girls said, too, that they were anxious to see Dora, and wondered if she would be like Hilda ; but this Hilda told them she could not be, as she had dark hair, and her mother had told her that Dora's was fair. And Nana ! Hilda had actually not seen her since she had left her at school six years ago.

It is a great happiness to look forward to seeing somebody whom we love and have not met for a very long time, and Hilda enjoyed this great happiness now.

'You know,' she had said several times to old Turc, who was really growing old now, for he was not a young dog when Hilda first knew him, 'my little sister is coming to school, and she will love you quite as much as I do, for she loves dogs dearly, and I have often written to tell her about you.'

Old Turc, as he walked along beside Hilda, looked up into her face very knowingly, as though he quite understood what she said. Hilda had still many conversations with the dog, and to these he paid such polite attention that many of the girls declared they really believed he did understand what she said.

'And she'll tell you about Jack,' she went on ; 'I want to hear about him again ; but my poor little pony, Pepper, is dead ; isn't that a pity?'

Turc's tail wagged, Hilda thought in sympathy.

The two were in the garden together. This was where Hilda generally poured forth her confidences to Turc.

Dolly now ran up to her.

'Mademoiselle L'Herbier sent me for you, Hilda,' she said, 'and you are to go to her at once in the ante-chamber.'

‘I thought she was out.’

‘But she has just come back, and wants you at once,’ and so saying, Dolly ran away for fear she should be tempted to tell Hilda what Mademoiselle L’Herbier did not wish her to know till she saw. She was so glad for her friend.

A minute or two later Hilda had run into the house, and was in the ante-chamber hall of the school. This was almost like a room; its floors were of wax, and a bench stood within it.

Hilda screamed with joy, for *they* had arrived. There stood Nana, Mademoiselle L’Herbier, dressed for walking, as she had just come in, and a little girl, who must be Dora, her own little sister. She kissed her very affectionately, and then threw her arms round her old nurse’s neck, whom she had never ceased lovingly to remember during the six long years that they had been parted.

Leading out of the ante-chamber was the children’s reception-room, where they received their visitors. In this room stood the best piano, and here Dolly had just had her music-lesson. Mademoiselle L’Herbier, on returning from the station, whither she had gone to meet the nurse and child upon receiving a telegram to say that they had arrived, looked into this room, and finding that Dolly’s lesson was quite finished, and Herr Stäger just going, sent Dolly at once to call Hilda, and whilst she was coming the cabman brought in the boxes. The music-master came out of the reception-room to pass through the ante-chamber as Hilda came in, and stood still for a moment to witness her joy.

Dora was very quiet, and seemed to be tired after her long journey.

‘That’s Hilda, I suppose,’ she said, as Mademoiselle kindly placed her hand on her shoulder, ‘my own real sister Hilda, I suppose, that I’ve quite forgotten; but I like her very much.’

Herr Stäger, the German music-master, then wished Mademoiselle L’Herbier ‘good-bye,’ and the rest of the

group passed into the reception-room. Nana stood and stared at Hilda.

She had grown very much. Her costume-pinafore, in which she had last seen her, had been set aside, and the apron of the elder girls had been adopted by her ; but little Miss Hilda was very much like big Miss Hilda. Her face and hair were very much the same. Mademoiselle L'Herbier took Dora by the hand and led her to see Madame Rivière. She looked around after Nana, as though she were afraid to move away from her.

'And you have it still, Nana !' Hilda then exclaimed. 'I forgot about it long ago, but now I remember quite well again ; and you are wearing the cross I gave you !'

Nana told her that of course she always wore it.

'And I have my doll still, Nana, packed away in her dear little trunk. Of course I don't play with her now, but I lend her sometimes to the other girls, and I always mean to keep her. I will lend her to Dora now ; I should think she would be very glad to have her, shouldn't you ?' At this moment Mademoiselle called to Hilda to bring Nana to see Madame, which call was instantly obeyed.

Hilda had already asked more than once how her father and mother were, but now she listened again very attentively for Nana's answers when Madame asked the same questions.

'You darling little Dora !' Hilda then said, as she knelt on the ground and folded her little sister in her arms. 'I am glad to see you again. Are you very glad to see me too ?'

Dora shyly returned the embrace, and said 'Yes.'

Hilda was then told to take her little sister into her dormitory to get ready for dinner. She was to sleep to-night in the little bed next to her, and Nana was invited to go into the kitchen and have some dinner also.

The travellers were both tired, and as soon as Dora had dined she went to bed ; as soon as Nana had done the same,



““THAT’S HILDA, I SUPPOSE.””

—

she wished the children 'good-bye' for the present, and went to her new home.

This was in Paris. Mrs. Montgomery had secured Nana a good home here, for she had said that with both children in France she would like to stay there too.

When Mrs. Montgomery had written to ask Madame De Fivas, Basil Harcourt's married sister, if she knew of a situation that would be likely to suit her black nurse, she said that she would be very glad to have her herself as nurse to her little baby; and Nana soon made herself so generally useful in many other ways besides attending to the baby, that Madame De Fivas wrote to Belvidere thanking Mrs. Montgomery for the treasure she had sent her. And the nurse was very happy too in her new home, because she was near her children, she said; and it was an understood thing that if they returned to Grenada, or her late master and mistress came to Europe, she was only lent for a season, and was to return to their service.

Dora liked recreation much better than the lesson hours at school. She had never played at school like Hilda, and had therefore, perhaps, never felt the necessity of knowing things well and thoroughly, as the little eight-year-old arbour school-mistress had felt it.

Dora was not fond of lessons, and it was a very good thing for her that she had an elder sister at school, to help and urge her to learn, also to take care of, love, and protect her.

Hilda was very fond of her little sister; and if she took care of her in the 'Baby Dora' days, she did so much more now.

At Madame Rivière's, the elder girls did not play with the little ones, unless they had any special favourites amongst them, and cared themselves to do so; but for Hilda's sake, and because she played with her, Dora was a special favourite with many elder girls, was often invited to skip with them in

the grounds, and sit beside them on Thursday afternoons whilst they dressed her dolls for her.

Dora, unlike Hilda when she was her age, liked to have a number of dolls at once, and always preferred the newest and prettiest. Madame De Fivas had given her a very pretty doll since she came to France, and for her a great many changes of clothes had already been made.

Hilda lent Dora Cleopatra, but the child did not care for her, and called her ugly. This hurt poor Hilda very much, for she had expected Dora to be fond of her, as she had been, and to be grateful for the loan. Very often had she looked forward to the time when she would see Dora, and please her by lending her the Nana-doll; and it was a greater disappointment to her, perhaps, than we can imagine, that Dora would not even nurse her. Nana was very glad when she saw how well she had been kept. Fortunately, Cleopatra was not a very breakable doll, or she could not have survived some of the accidents that had befallen her.

Dora was a dear little child, but in the same way that it had been time for Hilda to come to school and find her level, it was evidently time for her to come also. It never does for children to be spoilt. Hilda was delighted to have a little sister to love and protect, and it was a great pleasure for her to hear over and over again from Dora about their island home.

She could not picture Nenus the big boy that Dora now described him, but of course Hilda said he must have grown in all this time. She had always thought of him as just the same size that he was when, on her ninth birthday, he fetched her into the decorated arbour school-room.

Nana was more and more happy in her new home, for she already loved very much the little baby of whom she had the care, and Hilda and Dora came every now and then to spend a holiday afternoon with their friends, when Nana and baby fetched and took them back.



CHAPTER XIX.

ORDERED TO GLENCOE.

BUT meanwhile there was terrible anxiety at Belvidere. Mrs. Montgomery was taken so seriously ill that her husband despaired of her life. She had one bad attack of fever after another, and nothing seemed really to do her good.

Nana was dreadfully missed, for she was a very good nurse in every kind of sickness, and had always been the great stand-by in illness.

But Mr. Montgomery did all that lay in his power. He secured the best advice that was to be obtained, he hired a nurse from the hospital, and with her he nursed his wife himself. The native servants were very attentive in fetching everything that was required from any distance; but no real improvement in the health of their mistress seemed to come, and there was a feeling of depression throughout Belvidere.

It was mail-day. Mr. Montgomery got ready a sheet of paper to write to Passy. The letter must be posted within an hour; what should he say? He had delayed writing till the last moment, hoping that a change might come.

The doctor left the sick-room and joined him.

'I am about to write to the children,' Mr. Montgomery said; 'what can I tell them? how can I say that their mother is? They will wonder that she does not write herself. I must say something, and perhaps by next mail—who knows?'

The anxious husband hid his face in his hands.

‘Only One knows,’ answered the doctor reverently. ‘Tell them that their mother is very ill, but has taken a slight turn for the better, and that you hope by next mail to send better accounts.’

‘Can I say that? Oh, thank you, Dixon!’ exclaimed Mr. Montgomery, as gratefully he wrung the doctor’s hand. ‘The poor children are so far away that I could not bear to say more to grieve them than is absolutely necessary.’

The letter was then soon written and despatched, when Mr. Montgomery returned to his wife’s room.

He and Dr. Dixon were old friends. They had been undergraduates together in the same college twenty years ago, and when they met again in the distant island of Grenada, they were only too glad to renew a friendship begun so long ago; and now Dr. Dixon, who was one of the leading men of his profession in Grenada, spared as much as was possible of his very valuable time to attend upon the sick wife of his friend. It was intermittent fever from which she was suffering, and which one day found her better, the next left her ever so much worse; but she grew weaker and weaker.

Dr. Dixon then ordered change of air for his patient. It was the month of August, just the middle of the hot season in Grenada, and she must be moved into the high mountains at once.

There was a very pretty little house, called Glencoe, that Mr. Montgomery had lately purchased, on a hill nearly 3000 feet above the level of the sea. Here Mrs. Montgomery must at once be taken. She was a very bad sailor, and was therefore much too weak yet to endure a sea-voyage, so it would be of no use to order her farther.

But the change into the high mountains the doctor said must be immediately effected. The house was put ready at Glencoe, but now another difficulty arose.

How was this move to be carried out? The mountain roads were steep and rugged ; most of the way to Glencoe there were no carriage-paths at all ; and good horsewoman though Mrs. Montgomery was, she had not strength to sit on horseback for five consecutive minutes now, and she must be moved at once.

The native servants came to the rescue. They agreed to make a sort of bed for their mistress with shawls swung over and attached to bamboos, which two of them at a time would carry on their shoulders.

In this she could travel to Glencoe ; and as she could not bear the fatigue of a long journey, they would not take her the usual route, but a short cut across the hills which they knew. The house had been made very comfortable to receive the invalid, and the journey to Glencoe was set on foot. Mr. Montgomery knew that it was a perilous undertaking to remove his wife in her very weak state, but he knew also that to delay removing her was still more perilous.

Dr. Dixon said that he would not answer for the consequences if she became any weaker, and when he also kindly offered to accompany his patient on her journey, her husband felt much happier and much more satisfied to begin it.

Mrs. Montgomery wished to sit up as much as possible, so was propped up by pillows. As the sun was likely to be very hot during the day, they started early in the morning, so as to have as little great heat as possible, and a sunshade was attached to one of the bamboos to afford shelter to the invalid.

Her husband and the doctor rode just behind. Three women-servants came next, and other men followed to be in readiness to relieve the bearers when they grew tired. A loaded mule was behind them bearing provisions and other necessities that would be at once required ; a second mule carried two small boxes of clothes and house linen.

One large box would have sufficed, but it was easier for the mule to carry two small boxes than one that was large.

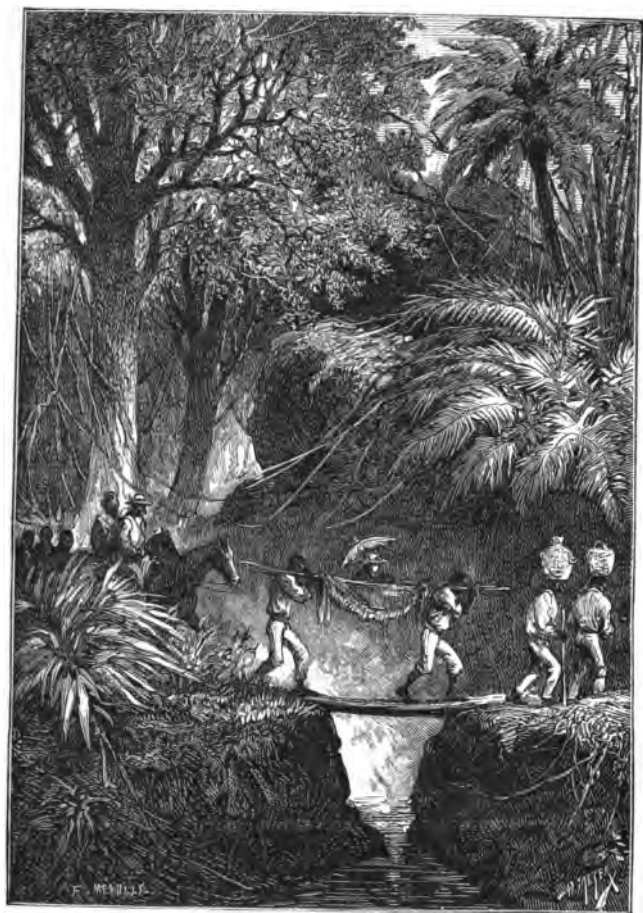
A man led each mule. It was a strange procession. Nenus and Plunkett went in front to prepare the way, and behind them walked two men with small loads on their heads that would have been rather awkward to attach to the mules. Jack followed his master's horse.

Presently the leaders halted. This road was certainly a very short cut, but the men had not been along it since heavy rains had come down, and now the boys missed a bridge that had connected two opposite banks between which a river flowed. What should they do? They were not far from their journey's end, and turn back they could not. Some of the men searched until they found a very large log. This must form their bridge. Their mistress was too tired for them to dare to loiter another moment longer than was necessary. The log reached far enough at both ends to form a pretty secure bridge, but it was very narrow for that purpose. The leaders, however, passed over easily, and so did the safe-footed bearers of their mistress.

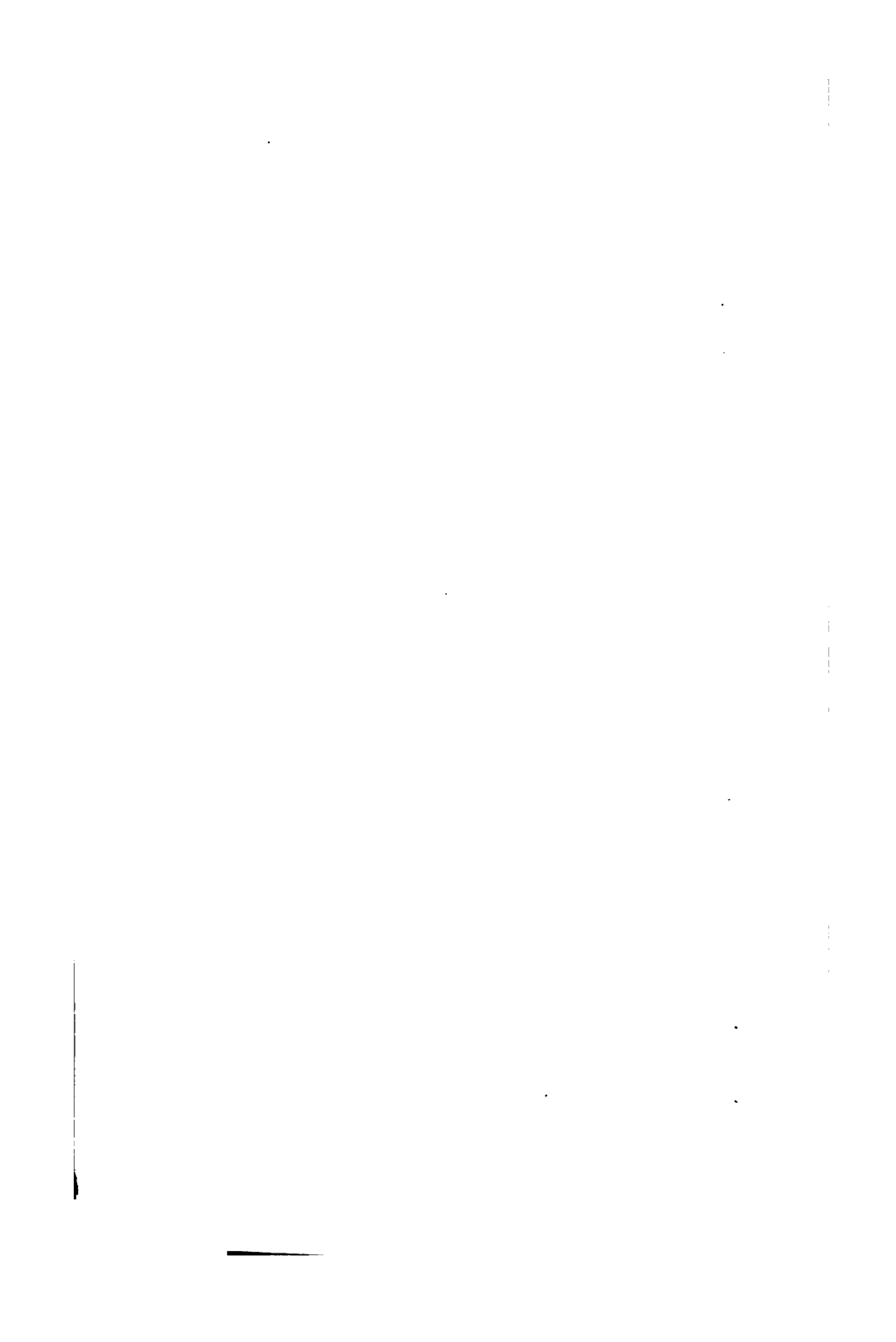
Mr. Montgomery did not speak, but it was a terribly anxious moment for him as he watched his wife being borne across the narrow, temporary bridge. His horse came next, then followed Jack, then the doctor. The gentlemen gave their horses their heads, and they stepped safely over to the other side.

At last Glencoe was reached, where Mrs. Montgomery arrived quite safely. She was so much exhausted, however, that she could not speak a word to anybody; but she took the nourishment that was given to her, and soon after being put to bed, she fell into a quiet sleep.

It was beautifully cool up at Glencoe to what it had been lower down in the valleys; indeed, as they journeyed upwards the difference in temperature was very perceptible.



A TEMPORARY BRIDGE.



There was a lovely view from the house. Hills in the far distance, valleys between them, rivers flowing this way and that, the beautiful expanse of sea, and the bay that looked quite land-locked.

Hilda would have been in love with Glencoe could she have seen that view.

The good doctor remained the night, and then left his friends to visit his other patients, with a promise to return as soon as possible.

Mrs. Montgomery was decidedly better already. Her husband thanked his friend very sincerely as he wished him 'good-bye.' The doctor chose the farthest way home. If it were farther, he said, it was certainly safer, and he liked to feel secure, when this was possible.

By next mail much brighter accounts were posted to the children than the mail before their father could have dared to hope would have been possible ; but still the mending was very slow, and would perhaps never be effectual as long as Mrs. Montgomery now remained in the island of Grenada.

Whilst his wife was gaining strength, Mr. Montgomery was thinking very seriously what was now to be done.

She refused to leave him alone in Grenada and go herself to England or France. That would be too miserable both for him and for her !

'It will not matter,' she said one day, when they were talking matters over together, 'even if we are ever so much poorer in another place ; but do not ask me again to leave you, for that I cannot. A wife's place is beside her husband, and I could not go away from you, whatever happened.'

He did not press the subject any more. God had mercifully restored his dear wife to him, how could he urge a separation from her ? He would not ; but more and more seriously he went on thinking what was to be done.



CHAPTER XX.

PLEASURE.

HILDA and Dora had been very anxious about their mother whilst she was so ill, and were very glad indeed when more cheerful news began to reach them, as was also Nana. If it had not been for the time that must elapse before she could arrive back in Grenada, she would have liked to have returned to nurse her mistress when she first heard the bad accounts of her health.

The baby of which Nana had the charge was generally put to bed whilst his parents had their dinner, and directly he was asleep she made tea for Madame De Fivas, which she carried to her into her boudoir.

It is not a French custom to take tea after dinner, but Madame De Fivas was essentially English, and as she liked her cup of tea after dinner better than anything else, she did not give it up because it was not customary in Paris to have it.

None of the French servants made tea to please her, but as Nana had always done this for her mistress in Grenada, the duty now devolved upon her, and regularly, half an hour after Madame De Fivas left the dining-room, Nana appeared every evening in the boudoir with the tea-tray.

To-day she appeared nearly ten minutes too soon, for she knew that during dinner the postman had come with foreign letters, and she could not rest until she heard what were the last tidings of her late mistress.

The boudoir was a very pretty room, within which, upon two pedestals, stood large vases full of beautiful flowers.

Madame was seated opposite the window, and when Nana went into the room Monsieur was walking up and down it, talking to his wife.

As soon as Nana had put down the tea-tray, he called to her to remain whilst he stopped still beside his wife.

‘Your mistress and I have something to tell you,’ he said ; ‘we have heard from Grenada to-day.’

Nana asked at once how Mrs. Montgomery was, and heard that she was better.

‘But,’ Monsieur De Fivas said, ‘the doctor has ordered her away from Grenada at once, and she and the mar’sa are coming to England.’

Nana clapped her hands.

‘Not only for a short time,’ he went on, ‘but to live in England altogether ; your late master is parting with his property.’

Nana danced for joy now ; yes, really and literally danced.

She had loved her late mistress very dearly, and it had been a sore trial to part from her, and now, according to promise, she would not only see, but live with her again.

The gentleman and his wife looked up surprised. It seemed strange to them that Nana should show her joy in so extravagant a manner. They had not been accustomed to such wild behaviour.

‘Dat news !’ she exclaimed ; ‘good news fe true fe Miss Hilda, Miss Dora, an’ me ! Hi !’ and again she clapped her hands and began to dance.

But then she remembered that the tea must not stand too

long, so she fetched the little table on which she had placed it, which she set beside Madame.

She then waited in the hopes of hearing more, but baby waking at that moment, and crying, she hastened to the night-nursery to him.

Hilda and Madame Rivière had received letters by the same mail,—Hilda to the effect that her parents were coming to England in about two months ; Madame Rivière to receive a quarter's notice for Hilda to leave school, and in case her parents chose to remove Dora, to place her at school in England, where Hilda would finish her education, the same notice was given for her.

Madame Rivière was sorry at the thought of parting with them. She liked these children very much, especially Hilda, who had been at her school now for more than six years, where she had made many improvements ; and Mademoiselle L'Herbier, when she heard what news had come with regard to these children, was also very sorry.

A steamer from the West Indies has anchored in Southampton Water. Steamers leave and arrive here very often on their route to and from the West Indies and other places, although their going and coming is unnoticed by the mass, from whom they take and to whom they bring no friends or letters.

But to those who look for their arrival they are very welcome when they come, and this steamer has brought Mr. and Mrs. Montgomery to England.

The latter was very weak when she arrived, and her husband took rooms for her at Southampton, where he decided to let her remain until he could find a suitable little home for her in or near London.

Meanwhile Mr. Montgomery was to pay the children a long visit, and tell them that they were to come home as soon as their parents were settled. Mrs. Montgomery was



“H1!” AND AGAIN SHE CLAPPED HER HANDS AND BEGAN TO DANCE.’



very anxious to know at once how the children were looking, and she could not bear to think of their being long kept in suspense after they knew that their parents had arrived.

It was now quite decided that at the end of the quarter both Hilda and Dora were to leave Passy for good. A telegram was sent to Madame De Fivas asking her kindly to spare Nana, who was to stay with Mrs. Montgomery at Southampton whilst her husband paid his visit to Paris.

Madame De Fivas sent Nana off at once. She had already engaged another nurse, and was only keeping her until she was required by her former mistress. The day after Nana arrived at Southampton Mr. Montgomery started for Paris.

He paid a very short visit to his children, as he was anxious first to get back to Southampton to report about them, and then at once to go on to London to take a house.

About a month after their arrival in England, Mr. and Mrs. Montgomery were very comfortably, very happily, and very thankfully housed in a pretty little villa on the outskirts of London, near to a good day-school for Hilda and Dora, and close by a metropolitan station, from whence Mr. Montgomery could take the train into the city, where he hoped soon to find some employment.

The children were at home, and so was Jack, for although Mr. and Mrs. Montgomery had had to find good homes for all their other animals, and leave them behind, they had felt that they could not part with Jack, their children's special friend, and had brought him to England with them.

It was strange to watch his welcome of his friends. He ran first to Dora, as though he only remembered her, and showed great joy at seeing her again; then he turned to Hilda, sniffed, looked up at her, seemed to be thinking, after which, as if some recollection dawned upon him, he jumped up at her, licked her hand, and barked loudly with delight.

Hilda was very glad to see Jack again, and this was quite

a surprise, as purposely she had not been told that he had come.

Hilda was very sorry to say 'good-bye' to Madame Rivière, Mademoiselle L'Herbier, Dolly, many of the other girls, and Turc, when she came away from school. Clochette had just left school for good, and had promised to write to her. Mary Scott generally spent her long holidays in England, and when she next came to London she had also promised to come and see Hilda.

But regrets had little place in Hilda's heart now on the evening of her arriving home in England.

Day after day since she had heard of her mother's illness had Hilda prayed that she might soon be better, and taught her little sister to do the same, and now very thankfully she returned thanks for the answer to her prayers.

Hilda had known some sorrows. As a little girl she had known what it was to leave everybody and everything she loved, and make her home amongst strangers; she had known great unhappiness for a little girl, when her soft heart hardened, and unkindness from her school-fellows had turned love within her into hatred, and the feeling of being naughty had made her very sad; but she had been very sorry for her naughtiness, it was over and past; and if she had once known unhappiness, she certainly knew great happiness now, as did also little Dora, when once again she flung her arms round her father's and mother's necks, and kissed them.

Nana we can only feel inclined to picture to ourselves as dancing again, she must have been so very happy now!

'I should have liked to see Rebecca and Nenus once more very much,' Hilda said during the evening; 'I haven't forgotten them, and I seem to remember Plunkett a little too; please, father, tell me something about them all.'

'Rebecca is married, Nenus is a pupil-teacher at your Cedar-Tree School, and Plunkett is butler to a lady in St. Patrick's.

I think your school answered after all, Hilda,' her father continued, laughing; 'something or other certainly made Nenus very ambitious to learn, for whatever work he had to do, he found time for his lessons, and, as far as I heard, Plunkett did the same.'

'Wasn't my school fun?' Hilda then said. 'Dora, did you ever play at school? I quite forgot to ask you this before.'

'No,' answered Dora; 'I didn't want to, for I don't think school is fun or play at all.'

'I expect that is because you never played at it,' Hilda said. 'Don't you think so, mother?'

'Perhaps so, darling; but I daresay Dora will find pleasure in learning some day.'

'What *is* pleasure, mother?' asked the little girl, who, if it meant what she thought it did, could not understand how she was to find pleasure in the way that her mother thought she would.

'What is it, Hilda?' asked Mr. Montgomery.

'You, mother, and Jack coming from Grenada to England, and Nana, Dora, and I coming home to you,' she answered readily.

'That is your definition,' said her father; 'different people find pleasure in different things and different ways. Let mother give us a definition of pleasure now; it was from her that Dora asked for one.'

'Yes, mother,' said Hilda; 'what should you call pleasure?'

'The power of enjoying, with very loving, thankful hearts, the peaceful, restful gladness which God so often sends us,' said Mrs. Montgomery softly.

Hilda considered. 'But people do find pleasure in such different things,' she said. 'I remember quite well before I came from Grenada Nenus being very happy because he caught a number of little birds in one day. I suppose it

gave him pleasure, but doesn't it seem strange that it could?'

'Very strange; but that was not real pleasure; and after Nenus understood that it gave the little birds pain, it gave him no pleasure at all to catch them, and he quite left off doing so.'

'He promised me he would,' said Hilda.

'And he kept his promise, and then found pleasure in protecting little birds from other boys.'

'I am so glad!' answered Hilda; then, turning to Dora, she said, 'Do you think now, Dora, that you understand what "pleasure" means?'

The little girl put her arms round her mother's neck, and, giving her a long, long kiss, whispered, 'I am so glad you're better now, mother, and that I see you and father again. Do you think I understand?'

Her mother did think so.

'There have been many things spoken and written about pleasure, Hilda,' said her father, 'and no doubt many definitions have been given of the word, but there are two that I remember very forcibly at this moment which I should like to tell you. Zimmerman, an author, who was also a great physician, writes: "Put only this restriction on your pleasures—be cautious that they hurt no creature that has life." And La Bruyère, a great French writer of the 17th century, says: "The most delicate, the most sensible of all pleasures, consists in promoting the pleasures of others."'

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